THE HUMAN BOY AND THE WAR

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Cover

THE HUMAN BOY AND THE WAR

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CONTENTS

The Battle of the Sand-Pit
The Mystery of Fortescue
The Countryman of Kant
Travers Minor, Scout
The Hutchings Testimonial
The Fight
Percy Minimus and His Tommy
The Prize Poem
The Revenge
The "Turbot's" Aunt
Cornwallis and Me and Fate
For the Red Cross

THE HUMAN BOY AND THE WAR

THE BATTLE OF THE SAND-PIT

After the war had fairly got going, naturally we thought a good deal about it, and it was explained to us by Fortescue that, behind the theory of Germany licking us, or us licking Germany, as the case might be, there were two great psychical ideas. As I was going to be a soldier myself, the actual fighting interested me most, but the psychical ideas were also interesting, because Fortescue said that often the cause won the battle. Therefore it was better to have a good psychical idea behind you, like us, than a rotten one, like Germany. I always thought the best men and the best ships and the best brains and the most money were simply bound to come out top in the long run; but Fortescue said that a bad psychical idea behind these things often wrecks the whole show. And so I asked him if we had got a good psychical idea behind us, and he said we had a champion one, whereas the Germans were trusting to a perfectly deadly psychical idea, which was bound to have wrecked them in any case--even if they'd had twenty million men instead of ten.

So that was all right, though, no doubt, the Germans think their idea of being top dog of the whole world is really finer than ours, which is "Live and let live." And, as I pointed out to Fortescue, no doubt if we had such a fearfully fine opinion of ourselves as the Germans have, then we also should want to be top dog of the world.

And Fortescue said:--

"That's just it, Travers major. Thanks to our sane policy of respecting the rights of all men, and never setting ourselves up as the only nation that counts, we do count--first and foremost; but if we'd gone out into the whole earth and bawled that we were going to make it Anglo-Saxon, then we should have been laughed at, as the Germans are now; and we should dismally have failed as colonists, just

as they have."

So, of course, I saw all he meant by his psychical idea, and no doubt it was a jolly fine thought; and most, though not all, of the Sixth saw it also. But the Fifth saw it less, and the Fourth didn't see it at all. The Fourth were, in fact, rather an earthy lot about this time, and they seemed to have a foggy sort of notion that might is right; or, if it isn't, it generally comes out right, which to the minds of the Fourth amounted to the same thing.

The war naturally had a large effect upon us, and according as we looked at the war, so you could judge of our opinions in general. I and my brother, Travers minor, and Briggs and Saunders--though Briggs and Travers minor were themselves in the Lower Fourth--were interested in the strategy and higher command. We foretold what was going to happen next, and were sometimes quite right; whereas chaps like Abbott and Blades and Mitchell and Pegram and Rice were only interested in the brutal part, and the bloodshed and the grim particulars about the enemy's trenches after a sortie, and so on.

In time, curiously enough, there got to be two war parties in the school. Of course they both wanted England to win, but we took a higher line about it, and looked on to the end, and argued about the division of the spoil, and the general improvement of Europe, and the new map, and the advancement of better ideas, and so on; while Rice and Pegram and such-like took the "horrible slaughter" line, and rejoiced to hear of parties surrounded, and Uhlans who had been eating hay for a week before they were captured, and the decks of battleships just before they sank, and such-like necessary but very unfortunate things.

I said to Mitchell--

"It may interest you to know that real soldiers never talk about the hideous side of war; and it would be a good deal more classy if you chaps tried to understand the meaning of it all, instead of wallowing in the dreadful details."

And Mitchell answered--

"The details bring it home to us and make us see red."

And I replied to Mitchell--

"What the dickens d'you want to see red for?"

And he said--

"Everybody ought to at a time like this."

Of course, with such ignorance you can't argue, any more than you could with Rice, when he swore that he'd give up his home and family gladly in exchange for the heavenly joy of putting a bayonet through a German officer. It wasn't the spirit of war, and I told him so, and he called me "von Travers," and said that as I was going to be a soldier, he hoped, for the sake of the United Kingdom in general, there would be no war while I was in command of anybody.

Gradually there got to be a bit of feeling in the air, and we gave out that we

stood for tactics and strategy and brain-power, and Rice and his lot gave out that they stood for hacking their way through. And as for strategy, they had the cheek to say that, if it came to actual battle, the Fourth would back its strategy against the Sixth every time. It was a sort of challenge, in fact, and rested chiefly on their complete ignorance of what strategy really meant.

When I asked Mitchell who were the strategists of the Fourth, he gave it away by saying--

"Me and Pegram."

Well, he and Pegram were merely cunning--nothing more. Mitchell was a good mathematician, and in money matters he excelled on a low plane; while Pegram was admitted to be a master in the art of cribbing, but no other. His bent of mind had been attracted to the subject of cribbing from the first, and while I hated him, and knew that he could never come to much good, I was bound to admit the stories told about his cribbing exploits showed great ingenuity combined with nerve. By a bitter irony, theology was his best subject, but only thanks to the possession of a Bible one inch square. He had found it when doing Christmas shopping with his aunt, who was his only relation, owing to his being an orphan, and when he asked her to buy it for him as one of his Christmas presents, she did so with pleasure and surprise, little dreaming of what was passing in his mind. I never saw the book, nor wished to see it, but Briggs, who did, told me it contained everything, only in such frightfully small print that you wanted a magnifying glass to read it. Needless to say, Pegram had the magnifying glass. And, thus armed, he naturally did Scripture papers second to none. He also manipulated a catapult for the benefit of his friends in the Lower Fourth, of whom he had a great many, and with this instrument, such was his delicacy of aim, he could send answers to questions in an examination through the air to other chaps, in the shape of paper pillets. He could also hurl insults in this way, or, in fact, anything. Once he actually fired his Bible across three rows of forms to Abbott. It flew through the air and fell at Abbott's feet, who instantly put one on it. But Brown, who was the master in command on the occasion, looked up at the critical moment and saw a strange object passing through the air. Only he failed to mark it down.

"What was that?" said Brown to Rice, who sat three chaps off Abbott.

"A moth, I think, sir," said Rice.

"Extraordinary time for a moth to be flying," said Brown.

"Very, sir," said Rice.

"Don't let it occur again, anyway," said Brown, who never investigated anything, but always ordered that it shouldn't occur again.

"No, sir," said Rice.

Then Abbott bent down to scratch his ankle, and all was well.

And this Pegram was supposed to have strategy as good as ours!

I never thought a real chance of a conflict would come, but it actually did in a most unexpected manner just before the holidays. The weather turned cold for a week, and then, after about three frosts, we had a big snow, and in about a day and a night there was nearly a foot of it. And, walking through the West Wood with Blades, I pointed out that the sand-pit, under the edge of the fir trees, would be a very fine spot for a battle on a small scale.

I said--

"If one army was above the sand-pit, and another army was down here, trying to storm the position, there would be an opportunity for a remarkably good fight and plenty of strategy; and if I led the Fifth and Sixth against the sand-pit, or if I defended the sand-pit against attacks by the Upper and Lower Fourth, the result would be very interesting."

And Blades agreed with me. He said he believed that it would give the Upper and Lower Fourth frightful pleasure to have a battle, and he was certain they would be exceedingly pleased at the idea. In fact, he went off at once to find Pegram and, if possible, Rice and Mitchell. The school was taking a walk that afternoon, as the football ground was eight inches under snow; and some were digging in the snow for eating chestnuts, of which a good many were to be found in West Wood, and others were scattered about. So Blades went to find Mitchell, Rice, and Pegram, and I considered the situation. The edge of the sand-pit was about eight feet high, and a frontal attack would have been very difficult, if not impossible; but there was an approach on the left--a gradual slope, fairly easy--and another on the right, rather difficult, as it consisted of loose stones and tree roots. On the whole, I thought I would rather defend than attack; but as, if anything came of it, I should be the challenger, I felt it would be more sporting to let the foe choose.

Then Rice and Mitchell came back with Blades, and they said that nothing would give them greater pleasure than a fight. They had heard my idea, and thought exceedingly well of it. They examined the spot and pretended to consider strategy, but, of course, they knew nothing about the possibilities of defence and attack. What they really wanted to know was how many troops they would have, and how many we should. We counted up and found that in the Fifth and Sixth, leaving out about four who were useless, and Perkins, who would have been valuable, but was crocked at footer for the moment, we should number thirty-one, while the Upper and Lower Fourth would have thirty-eight. I agreed to that, and Rice made the rather good suggestion that we should each have ten kids behind the fighting line to make ammunition. And I said I hoped there would be no stones in the snowballs, and Mitchell said the Fourth didn't consist of Germans, and I might be sure they would fight as fair as we did, if not fairer.

So it was settled for the next Saturday, and Brown and Fortescue consented

to umpire the battle, and Fortescue showed great interest in it.

There were a good many preliminaries to decide, and I asked Mitchell what chap was to be general-in-chief for the Fourth, and, much to my surprise, he said that Pegram was. And, still more to my surprise, he said that Pegram wished to attack and not defend. This alone showed how little they knew about strategy; but I only said "All right," and Mitchell actually said that Pegram backed the Fourth to take the sand-pit inside an hour! And I said that pride generally went before a fall. Then I saw Pegram--which was at a meeting of the commanders-in-chief--and we arranged all the details. He asked about the fallen, and I said that nobody would fall; but he said he thought some very likely would; and he also said that it would be more like the real thing and more a reward for strategy if, when anybody was fairly bowled over in the battle and prevented from continuing without a rest, that that soldier was considered as a casualty and taken to the rear. This was pretty good for Pegram; but as our superior position on the top of the sand-pit was bound to make our fire more severe than his, and put more of his men out of action, I pointed that out. But he said that if I thought our fire would be more severe than his, I was much mistaken. He said the volume of his fire would be greater, which was true. So I let him have his way, and we each selected ten kids for the ammunition. Travers minor didn't much like fighting against me, but, of course, he had to, though it was rather typical of Mitchell and Pegram that they were very suspicious of him before the battle, and wouldn't tell him any of the strategy, or give him a command in their army, for fear of his being a traitor. And they felt the same to Briggs, though, of course, Briggs and Travers minor were really just as keen about victory for the Fourth as anybody else in it. And the only reason why my brother didn't like fighting against me was that, with my strategy, he felt pretty sure I must win.

The generals--Pegram and I--visited the battlefield twice more, and arranged where the wounded were to lie and where the umpires were to stand, in comparative safety behind a tree on the right wing; but, of course, we didn't discuss tactics or say a word about our battle plans. The fight was to last one hour, and if at the end of that time we still held the sand-pit, we were the victors. And for half an hour before the battle began, we were to make ammunition and pile snow and do what we liked to increase the chances of victory.

I, of course, led the Fifth and Sixth, and under me I had Saunders, as general of the Sixth, and Norris, as general of the Fifth. As for the enemy, Pegram was generalissimo, to use his own word, and Rice and Abbott and Mitchell and Blades were his captains. It got jolly interesting just before the battle, and everybody was frightfully keen, and the kids who were not doing orderly and red-cross work, were allowed to stand on a slight hill fifty yards from the sand-pit and watch the struggle.

And on the morning of the great day, happening to meet Rice and Mitchell, I asked them what was the psychical idea behind the attack of the Fourth; and Rice said his psychical idea was to give the Sixth about the worst time it had ever had; and Mitchell said his psychical idea was to make the Sixth wish it had never been born. They meant it, too, for there was a lot of bitter feeling against us, and I realised that we were in for a real battle, though there could only be one end, of course. They had thirty-eight fighters to our thirty-one, and they had rather the best of the weight and size; but in the Sixth we had Forbes and Forrester, both of the first eleven and hard chuckers; and we had three other hard chuckers and first eleven men in the Fifth, besides Williams, who was the champion long-distance cricket ball thrower in the school.

We had all practised a good deal, and also instructed the kids in the art of making snowballs hard and solid. The general feeling with us was that we had the brains and the strategy, while the Fourth had rather the heavier metal, but would not apply it so well as us. When a man fell, the ambulance, in the shape of two red-cross kids, was to conduct him to a place safe from fire in the rear; and when he was being taken from the firing-line, he was not to be fired at, but the battle was to go on, though the red-cross kids were to be respected. I should like to draw a diagram of the field, like the diagrams in the newspapers, but that I cannot do. I can, however, explain that, when the great moment arrived, I manned the top of the sand-pit with my army, and during the half hour of preparation threw up a wall of snow all along the front of the sand-pit nearly three feet high. And along this wall I arranged the Fifth, led by Norris, on the right wing. Five men, commanded by Saunders, specially guarded the incline on the left, which was our weak spot, and the remaining ten men, all from the Sixth, took up a position five yards to the rear and above the front line, in such a position that they could drop curtain fire freely over the Fifth. I, being the Grand Staff, took up a position on the right wing on a small elevation above the army, from which I could see the battle in every particular; and Thwaites, of the Sixth, who was too small and weak to be of any use in the fighting lines, was my adjutant to run messages and take any necessary orders to the wings.

As for the enemy, they made no entrenchments or anything of the kind, though they watched our dispositions with a great deal of interest. Pegram studied the incline on our wing, and evidently had some ideas about a frontal attack also, which would certainly mean ruin for him if he tried it, as it would have been impossible to rush the sand-pit from the front. They made an enormous amount of ammunition, and as they piled it within thirty yards of our parapet, they evidently meant to come to close quarters from the first. I was pleased to observe this. They arranged their line rather well, in a crescent converging upon our wings; but there was no rearguard and no reserve, so it was clear everybody

was going into action at once. The officers were distinguished by wearing white footer shirts, which made them far too conspicuous objects, and it was clear that Pegram was not going to regard himself as a Grand Staff, but just fight with the rest. Needless to say, I was prepared to do the same, and throw myself into the thickest of it if the battle needed me and things got critical. But I felt, somehow, from the first that we were impregnable.

Well, the battle began by Fortescue blowing a referee's football whistle, and instantly the strategy of the enemy was made apparent. They opened a terrific fire, and their one idea evidently was to annihilate the Sixth. They ignored the Fifth, but poured their entire fire upon the Sixth; and a special firing-party of about six or seven chosen shots, or sharpshooters, poured their entire fire on me, where I stood alone. About ten snowballs hit me the moment Fortescue's whistle went, and the position at once became untenable and also dangerous. So I retired to the Sixth, and sent word to the Fifth by Thwaites to very much increase the rapidity of their fire. Which they did; and Pegram appealed that I was out of action, but Fortescue said I was not.

It was exceedingly like the Great War in a way, and the Fourth evidently felt to the Fifth and Sixth what the Germans felt to the French and English. They merely hated the Fifth, but they fairly loathed the Sixth, and wanted to put them all out of action in the first five minutes of the battle. Needless to say, they failed; but we lost Saunders, who somehow caught it so hot, guarding the slope, that he got winded and his nose began to bleed at the same moment, which was a weakness of his, brought on suddenly by a snowball at rather close range. So he fell, and the red-cross kids took him out of danger. This infuriated us, and, keeping our nerve well, we concentrated our fire on Mitchell, who had come far too close after the success with Saunders. A fair avalanche of snowballs battered him, and he went down; and though he got up instantly, it was only to fall again. And Fortescue gave him out, and he was conducted to a ruined cowshed, where the enemy's ambulance stood in the rear of their lines.

I had already ordered the Sixth to take open formation and scatter through the Fifth; and this undoubtedly saved them, for though we lost my aide-de-camp, Thwaites, who was no fighter and nearly fainted, and was jolly glad to be numbered with those out of action, for some time afterwards we lost nobody, and held our own with ease. Once or twice I took a hand, but it wasn't necessary, and when we fairly settled to work, we made them see they couldn't live within fifteen yards of us. They made several rushes, however, but, by a happy strategy, I always directed our fire on the individual when he came in, and thus got two out of action, including Rice. He was a great fighter, and I was surprised he threw up the sponge so soon; but after a regular battering and blinding, he said he'd "got it in the neck," and fell and was put out with one eye bunged. Travers minor also

fell, rather to my regret; and what struck me was that, considering all their brag, the Fourth were not such good plucked ones when it came to the business of real war, as we were. It made a difference finishing off Rice, for he had fought well, and his fire was very accurate, as several of us knew to our cost. I felt now that if we could concentrate on Pegram and Blades, who were firing magnificently, the battle would be practically over. But Blades, owing to his great powers, could do execution and still keep out of range. He was, in fact, their seventeen-inch gun, you might say; and though Williams on our side could throw further, he proved in action rather feeble and not a born fighter by any means. As for Pegram, he always seemed to be behind somebody else, which, knowing his character, you would have expected. At last, however, he led a storming party to the slope, and, leaving the bulk of my forces to guard the front, I led seven to stem his attack. For the first time since the beginning of the battle, it was hand-to-hand; but we had the advantage of position, and were never in real danger. I had the great satisfaction of hurling Pegram over the slope into his own lines, and he fell on his shoulder and went down and out. He was led away holding his elbow and also limping; but his loss did not knock the fight out of the Fourth, though in the same charge they lost Preston and we nearly lost Bassett. But he got his second wind and was saved to us, though only for a time, for Blades, who had a private hate of Bassett, came close and scorned the fire, and got three hard ones in on Bassett from three yards; and Fortescue had to say Bassett was done. Blades, however, was also done, and there was a brief armistice while they were taken away.

We now suddenly concentrated on Mitchell, who was tiring and had got into range. I think he was fed up with the battle, for, after a feeble return, he went down when about ten well-directed snowballs took him simultaneously on the face and chest, and then he chucked it and went to the ambulance. At the same moment one of their chaps, called Sutherland, did for Norris. Norris had been getting giddy for some time, and he also feared that he was frost-bitten, and when Sutherland, creeping right under him, got him well between the eyes with a hard one, he was fairly blinded, though very sorry to join our casualties. I had a touch of cramp at the same moment, but it passed off.

We'd had about half an hour now, and five of the ammunition kids were out of action with frozen hands. Then we got one more of the enemy, in the shape of Sutherland, and their *moral* ought to have begun to get bad; but it did not. Though all their leaders were now down, they stuck it well, while we simply held them with ease, and repelled two more attempts on the slope. In fact, Williams wanted to go down and make a sortie, and get a few more out of action; but this I would not permit for another five minutes, though during those exciting moments we prepared for the sortie, and knocked out Abbott, who, much to my surprise, had fought magnificently and covered himself with glory, though lame. On their side

they got MacAndrew, owing to an accident. In fact, he slipped over the edge of the sand-pit, and was taken prisoner before he could get back, and we were sorry to lose him, not so much for his own sake, as because his capture bucked up the Fourth to make fresh efforts.

And then came the critical moment of the battle, and a most unexpected thing happened.

With victory in our grasp, and a decimated opposition, a frightful surprise occurred, and the most unsporting thing was done by the Fourth that you could find in the gory annals of war.

It was really all over, bar victory, and we were rearranging ourselves under a very much weakened fire, when we heard a shout in the woods behind us, and the shout was evidently a signal. For the whole of the Fourth still in action made one simultaneous rush for the slope, and of course we concentrated to fling them back. But then, with a wild shriek, there suddenly burst upon us from the rear the whole of their casualties!

Mitchell and Rice and Pegram came first, followed by Travers minor and Preston and Blades and Sutherland and Abbott. They had rested and refreshed themselves with two lemons and other commissariat, and then, taking a circuitous track from behind their ambulance, had got exactly behind us through the wood. And now, uttering the yells that the regular Tommies always utter when charging, they were on us with frightful impetus, just while we were repelling the frontal attack on the slope, and before we had time to divide to meet them. In fact, they threw the whole weight of a very fine charge on to us and fairly mowed us down. There was about a minute of real fighting on the slope, and blood flowed freely. We got back into the fort, so to say; but the advancing Fourth came back, too, and the casualties took us in the rear. Then, unfortunately for us, I was hurled over the sand-pit, and three chaps--all defenders--came on top of me, and half the snow-bank we had built came on top of them. With the snowbank gone, it was all up. I tried fearfully hard to get back, but of course the Fourth had guarded the slope when they took it, and in about two minutes from the time I fell out of our ruined fortifications, all was over. In fact, the Fourth was now on the top of the sand-pit and the shattered Fifth and Sixth were down below. One by one our men were flung, or fell, over, and then Fortescue advanced from cover with Brown and blew his whistle, and the battle was done.

We appealed; but Pegram said all was fair in war, and Fortescue upheld him; and in a moment of rage I told Pegram and Mitchell they had behaved like dirty Germans, and Mitchell said they might, or they might not, but war was war, anyway. And he also said that the first thing to do in the case of a battle is to win it. And if you win, then what the losers say about your manners and tactics doesn't matter a button, because the rest of civilisation will instantly come over

to your side.

And Blades said the Sixth had still a bit to learn about strategy, apparently, and Pegram--showing what he was to a beaten foe--offered to give me some tips!

Mind you, I'm not pretending we were not beaten, because we were; and the victors fought quite as well as we did; but I shall always say that, with another referee than Fortescue, they might have lost on a foul. No doubt they thought it was magnificent, but it certainly wasn't war--at least, not what I call war.

We challenged them to a return battle the next Saturday, and Pegram said, as a rule, you don't have return battles in warfare, but that he should be delighted to lick us again, with other strategies, of which he still had dozens at his disposal. Only Pegram feared the snow would unfortunately all be gone by next Saturday; and the wretched chap was quite right--it had.

Mitchell, by the way, got congestion of his lungs two days after the battle, showing how sickness always follows warfare sooner or later. But he recovered without difficulty.

THE MYSTERY OF FORTESCUE

My name is Abbott, and I came to Merivale two years ago. I have got one leg an inch and three-quarters shorter than the other, but I make nothing of it. A nurse dropped me on a fender when I was just born, owing to a mouse suddenly running across her foot. It was more a misfortune than anything, and my mother forgave her freely. When I was old enough I also forgave her. In fact, I only mention it to explain why I am not going into the Army. All Abbotts do so, and it will be almost a record my going into something else.

Many chaps have no fighting spirit, and, as a rule, it is not strong in schoolmasters; yet when the call came for men, three out of our five answered it and went. Two, who were well up in the Terriers, got commissions, and the other enlisted, so we were only left with Brown, who can't see further than a pink-eyed rat and isn't five foot three in his socks, though in his high-heeled boots he may be, and Fortescue.

You will say this must have had a pretty bright side for us, and, at first sight, no doubt it looks hopeful. In fact, we took a very cheerful view of it, because you can do what you like with Brown, and Fortescue only teaches the Fifth and Sixth.

On the day that Hutchings cleared out to join the Army, and we were only

left with Fortescue, Brown, and the Doctor, we were confronted with serious news. In fact, after chapel on that day, we heard, much to our anxiety, that old Dunston himself was going to fill the breach.

Those were his very words. He talked with a sort of ghastly funniness and used military terms.

He said--

"Now that our valued and honoured friends, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Manwaring, and Mr. Meadows have answered their nation's call, with a loyalty to King and Country inevitable in men who know the demands as well as the privileges of Empire, it behoves us, as we can and how we can, to fill their places. This, then, in my contribution to the Great War. I shall fight in no foreign trenches, but labour here, sleeplessly if need be, and undertake willingly, proudly, the arduous task that they have left behind. I shall confront no cannon, but I shall face the Lower School. Henceforth, after that amalgamation of class and class which will be necessary, you may count upon your head master to answer the trumpet call and fill the breach. But I do not disguise from myself that such labours must prove no sinecure, and I trust the least, as well as the greatest, to do their part and aid me with good sense and intelligence."

Well, there it was; and we saw in a moment that you can't escape the horrors of war, even though you are on an island with the Grand Fleet between you and the foe.

When it came to the point, the Doctor was fairly friendly, but there was always something about him that was awful and solemn and very depressing to the mind. You could crib easily enough with him, for he had a much more trustful disposition than Hutchings, or Brown, or Fortescue, and was also short-sighted at near range; but the general feeling with the Doctor was a sense of weariness and undoubted relief when it was over. It was as near like being in church as anything could be.

Beginning at the beginning of subjects bored him. In fact, he often found, when he went back to the very start of a lesson, he'd forgotten it himself, moving for so many years on only the higher walks of learning; and then, finding that he had forgotten some footling trifle on the first page of a primer, he became abstracted and lost heart about it, and seemed more inclined to think than to talk.

Another very curious habit he had was to start on one thing--say Latin--and then drift off into something else--say geography. Or he might begin with algebra and then something would remind him of the procession of the equinoxes, or the nebula in Orion, and he would soar from earth and wander among the heavenly bodies until the class was over. And if he happened to be very much interested himself, he wouldn't let it be over; and then we had to sit on hearing the Doctor maundering about double stars, or comets perhaps, while everybody else was in

the playground.

I think he got rather sick of the Lower School after about a month of it, and Fortescue took over a good many of the classes in his normal style, which was more business-like than the Doctor and more punctual in its working. Fortescue was cold and hadn't much use for us in school or out, but he was just, and we liked him pretty well until the mystery began. Then we gradually got to dislike him, and then despise him, and then hate him.

He was rather out of the common in a way, being an Honourable and related to the famous family of Fortescue, which has shone a good deal in history off and on. And, of course, when the war broke out, we naturally expected that the Honourable Howard Fortescue would seize the opportunity to shine also, which he could not do as an undermaster at Merivale. He was a big, fine man, six feet high, with a red complexion and a Roman nose. Certainly, he did not play games, but he was all right in other ways, and had been a lawn-tennis player of the first-class in past times at Oxford, and, in fact, got his half-blue for playing at that sport against Cambridge.

So it seemed to us pretty low down that he didn't join Kitchener's Army. As a matter of fact, he didn't even try to. He was a very sublime sort of man and not what you might call friendly to us, yet if anybody appealed to him in any sort of way, he generally thawed a bit and responded in quite a kind manner.

We argued a good deal about him, and Travers major said it was natural pride, because, being of the family of Fortescue, he knew there was a gulf fixed between him and us. And Travers did not blame him, and more did I, or Briggs. But Rice, who is Irish, and who had got sent up on the report of Fortescue for saying, as he thought, something disrespectful about the British Army, hated Fortescue with a deadly hatred. Which was natural, because Fortescue had misunderstood, and Rice had really said nothing against the Army, but against Protestants, which, being a Roman Catholic himself, was merely his point of view and no business of Fortescue's.

And when Fortescue wouldn't become a soldier, Rice left no stone unturned, as they say, to worry him about it. At that time Milly Dunston, the Doctor's youngest daughter, had just come back from a school where she had been finished, and Rice's sister was at the same school, so she took notice of Rice. And it soon turned out that Milly Dunston also hated Fortescue. I believe he had snubbed her in some way over English literature, at which Fortescue was said to be a flyer, but Milly Dunston was not. She had, in fact, praised a novel to him, and he had laughed and told her it was quite worthless, and advised her to read some novels by people she had never heard of. And then he had slighted the school where she had finished, and so, when Rice explained that Fortescue was a coward and preferred the comparative comfort of Merivale to the manly business of going

to Salisbury Plain and living in mud and becoming useful to the Empire, Milly Dunston quite agreed with Rice, and said something ought to be done about it.

We helped because we thought the same. In fact, everybody seemed to be of one opinion, and little by little Fortescue began to see signs of great unpopularity growing up against him.

At first he ignored these signs, being evidently unprepared to take what you might call a delicate sort of hint. For instance, he smoked a pipe and kept a Japanese vase on the mantelpiece of his study full of black crows' feathers, which he was in the habit of picking up on Merivale Heath, where he often went for lonely walks. With these feathers he cleaned out the stem of his pipe.

Well, Milly Dunston bought a white fowl for the Doctor's dinner, and told the man at the shop to send it without plucking the feathers off. Which he did do, and she got them and gave them to Rice, who dexterously took away Fortescue's black feathers and substituted the white ones. But Fortescue went on just as though he hadn't noticed it, and when Saunders was with Fortescue, having his special coaching lesson for a Civil Service exam., he said that Fortescue took a white feather and cleaned his pipe with it as though quite indifferent to the colour.

Then Milly Dunston got a ball of knitting wool and four knitting needles, for all of which she paid herself, and Rice once more did the necessary strategy and arranged them on Fortescue's desk, where his eyes would fall upon them on returning to his study. But they merely disappeared, and Fortescue gave no sign.

Then Travers major started a very interesting theory on the subject, and he said there must be some reason far deeper than mere cowardice behind the mystery of Fortescue. He said that it was impossible for a Fortescue to be a coward in the common or garden sense of funking danger, but he admitted that he might be a coward in some other way, such as not liking discipline, or living in a tent, or wearing uncomfortable clothes, or getting up early to the sound of a bugle. And Briggs said that he thought perhaps Fortescue was keeping a widowed mother and sisters, or an old aunt, or some such person by his exertions at Merivale, in which case, of course, he couldn't go. But Rice didn't see why not, even if it was so; and more did I, because the Government gives full compensation for women relations in general; but Briggs said I had got it all wrong, and that if Fortescue had an aunt, she wouldn't gain a penny by his going to the war, however old and poor she was. In fact, he believed that only a wife who was going to have a baby got anything at all, owing to the great need for keeping up the race.

Then Rice said that it didn't make any difference to his deadly feeling against Fortescue, and he also said that he was going on rubbing it into Fortescue, and leaving no stone unturned to make his life a burden to him until he enlisted; and Travers major said that Rice was feeling the instinct of pure revenge, and Rice

said he might be, but that was what he intended to do. Anyway, he was sure the War Office and Admiralty didn't care a button about aunts.

Then we divided into two factions on the subject of Fortescue, and one faction decided to leave him to his conscience and mind its own business, which wasn't driving Fortescue to war; while the other side took the opposite course, and decided to work at Fortescue with the utmost ingenuity until in sheer despair he was driven to do his duty. And Briggs and Travers major and Travers minor and Saunders and Hopwood abandoned the pursuit, so to say; while I and Rice and a chap called Mitchell, all ably assisted by Milly Dunston, continued in our great attempt to wake Fortescue to the call of his country and storm his lines, as Rice said.

As for Mitchell, he came into it rather curiously, and it shows how an utter accident will sometimes reveal anybody in their true colours, and surprise other people, who thought they knew them and yet didn't. Mitchell was a mere rabbit in character and nothing in learning. And, in fact, he only had one feature besides his nose, and that was his love for money. Money, you might say, was his god, and his financial operations in the matter of loans to the kids were a study in themselves. But over Fortescue he came out in a most unexpected manner, and much to our surprise, made up a bit of poetry about him! Which shows nothing happens but the unexpected, and nobody was more astonished in a sort of way than Mitchell himself, because he never knew he could do it.

How to use the poem to the best purpose was a question that Milly solved. She typed it by night on her own typewriter, and then directed Rice, at the first opportunity, to put it on Fortescue's desk when his study was empty. And he did so, and this is what Fortescue found awaiting him when he returned:

"You ask us lots of questions
And we answer if we can,
And now we'll jolly well ask you one.
You call yourself a man,
Then why on earth don't you enlist
And try to do your share
Where the 'Black Marias' bellow
And the shrapnel's in the air?
And if you will not tell us why,
Then we'll tell you instead.
It's just because you funk it
And would hate to be shot dead.
In other words, in fact in one,
Most Honourable Howard,

Though of the race of Fortescue,
You are a bally coward!"

We didn't much envy Fortescue his feelings when he read these stirring lines,

and in fact, I, in my hopefulness, believed they would actually win our object and start Fortescue on the path of duty and rouse him from his lethargical attitude to the war; but, strange to say, they went off him like water off a duck's back. Not a muscle moved, so to speak, or if it did nobody saw it do so. He went on his way for all the world as if civilisation was not in its death throes. And then Rice--to show you what Rice still felt about it--offered Mitchell a week's pocket-money if he would write yet another poem of even a more fiery and stinging character. And Mitchell gladly agreed, and took enormous trouble and burnt the midnight oil, as the saying is, and produced certainly a poem full of rhymes and great abuse of Fortescue, yet not nearly such a fine poem as the first. And Rice said it wasn't up to the mark and wouldn't pay for it, and Mitchell said it was a contract and written on commission and must be paid for by law. But Rice knew no law and he showed the poem to Travers major, who instantly tore it up and kicked Mitchell next time he met him and told him he was a dirty little cad.

So Mitchell cooled off to Rice, and, in fact, his next poem was actually about Rice--not written to order, but for pure hate of Rice--and it was undoubtedly a bitter and powerful poem; but Rice, being far stronger than Mitchell, made him eat it and swallow it in front of his class, though it was written in red ink. And Mitchell said if he died, Rice would be hung. But he felt no ill effects, though he rather hoped he would.

At this season, however, a far greater and more splendid poem than any Mitchell could do had appeared in England. In fact, it was set to music and England rang with it--also Ireland. At least, so Rice said, because his mother had told him so in a letter. There was a special mention of Ireland in it, and Rice's mother told him that it had made more recruits in Ireland than Mr. Redmond and Sir Edward Carson put together.

Rice never does anything by halves, and he actually learnt the poem by heart, and also found out the tune somehow and sang it when possible. Once, in fact, he woke up in the night singing it from force of habit, as the saying is, and his prefect, who happened to be Mactaggert, said there was a time for everything, and threatened to report Rice if he did it again.

I asked Rice why he had made such a great effort and learnt anything he wasn't obliged to learn, and he said, firstly, because it was the grandest poem he had ever heard, and, secondly, because he had a great idea some day to sing it to Fortescue, as it applied specially to him by dwelling on the fearfulness of hanging

back when the Empire cried out for you.

The poem said the Empire was calling to every one of her sons of low and high degree, and so, of course, it was also calling to Fortescue; and Rice thought that as it was pretty certain Fortescue wouldn't read it, and, no doubt, fought shy of patriotic poetry in general just now, he meant to wait for some happy opportunity when Fortescue was not in a position to get out of earshot and sing it to him.

But the opportunity did not come, so Rice adopted the former plan of leaving the poem in Fortescue's room. He had plenty of printed copies of the words, because the poem, after first appearing in a London newspaper of great renown, had been copied, at the special wish of the author, into hundreds and thousands of other papers; and to show you the tremendous liking people had for it, even the *Merivale Weekly Trumpet* printed it and Milly Dunston found it there.

She, by the way, had another pretty bitter cut at Fortescue, which cost more money, and she told Rice she had paid five shillings and sixpence for her great insult. In fact, she sent Fortescue a shawl and a cap, such as is worn by aged women, with red, white, and blue ribbons in it. Which, of course, meant that Fortescue was an old woman himself. It was frightfully deadly if you understood it, and Rice said that only a girl could have thought of such a cruel thing.

The parcel was sent by post, but once more we were doomed to disappointment, as they say, for nothing came of it except slight advantage to the matron in Fortescue's house. In fact, he gave her the five shilling shawl, but the cap we never saw again, and doubtless it was burnt to a cinder in Fortescue's fire.

Then Rice tried the patriotic poem, and so as there should be no mistake he covered the back of it with paste, and in this manner fastened it very firmly to the looking-glass, just behind the spot where Fortescue kept his pipes on the mantelpiece.

We didn't hope much from it, and expected he would merely scrape it off and take it lying down in his usual cowardly manner. But imagine our immense surprise when we found he had sneaked to the Doctor! And even that was nothing compared to the extraordinary confession that he had made to the Doctor. And it all came out, and, as Mitchell said, a bolt from the blue fell on him and me and Rice.

After stating the facts of the case, which were that Mr. Fortescue had been from the beginning of the term subject to a great deal of annoyance from boys, who laboured under the offensive delusion that he ought to go to the Front, the Doctor said--

"It is my honoured friend, Mr. Fortescue's wish that I inform you of the circumstances which prevent an action which he would have been the first to take did his physical welfare permit of it. But unhappily he suffers from an enlarged

aorta and it is impossible for him to take his place in our line of defences, though that impossibility has caused him the sorrow of his life. It happens, however, that Nature has blessed Mr. Fortescue with abundant gifts while denying him his health, and in the pages of that work of reference known as 'Who's Who'--pages that I fear few among you will ever adorn--may be found the distinguished name of the Honourable Howard Fortescue in connection with notable achievements. For Mr. Fortescue is a votary of the Muses. Already he has two volumes of verse to his credit and three works of fiction; while in a subsequent edition of the volume, it will doubtless be recorded that he was the author of a certain admirable poem which has recently stirred the United Kingdom to its depths and sent more young men to the enlisting stations than any other inspiration of the time. But it was, it seems, left for one of my pupils to combine idiocy with insolence and affix a copy of his own immortal composition to Mr. Fortescue's looking-glass! This was positively the last straw, and my esteemed colleague who, up to the present time has allowed his sense of humour to ignore your insufferable impertinences, felt that it was bad for yourselves to proceed further upon so perilous a path. Very rightly, therefore, he called my attention to a persecution I should have thought impossible within these walls. He has no desire to give me the names of the culprits, and it is well for them that he has not; but having placed the whole circumstances in my hands, I cannot permit the outrage to pass without recording my abhorrence and shame. I may further remind you that Wednesday next is our half-term whole holiday, and if before that date no private and abject apology is committed to the hands of Mr. Fortescue by those who have disgraced themselves and put this affront upon him--if that is not done, and if I do not hear from him that he is thoroughly satisfied with the nature of that expression of regret, then there will be no half-term whole holiday and righteous and guilty alike will suffer."

Needless to say this tremendous speech made a very great impression on me and Rice and Mitchell. Milly Dunston did not hear it, but it made a great impression on her too, when she heard the facts, and we felt, in a way, that she was a good deal to blame, because she could easily have looked up "Who's Who," being free of the Doctor's library, which we were not.

Of course, there was no difficulty about the apology, which I wrote with help from Mitchell; but, showing what girls are, though she had invented most of the things we did to Fortescue, she calmly refused to sign the apology and said she should apologise personally to him. No doubt she didn't, and Rice chucked her afterwards.

Rice was the most cut up. He said he should never feel the same again after being such a simple beast, and he changed over from hating Fortescue to thinking him the most wonderful and splendid man in the world, and far the best poet after Shakespeare. And to show how frightfully Rice feels things and the rash way he

goes on, I can only tell you that when we signed the apology, he cut himself on his arm, just above the wrist, and got two drops of blood and signed with them. And after his name he wrote the grim words "his blood," so that Fortescue shouldn't think it was merely red ink.

The apology went like this:

We, the undersigned members of the Lower Fourth form of Merivale beg to express our great regret for having tried to make the Honourable Howard Fortescue go to the Front. We freely confess we ought not to have done so and that we were much deluded. We utterly did not know that he had got an aorta, and we are very sorry that he has, and we hope that he will soon recover from it. And we beg to say that we think his poem the best poem we have ever read and also better than Virgil. And we hope that he will overlook it on this occasion and are willing to do anything he may decide upon to show the extent of our great regret.

(Signed) RUPERT MITCHELL,
PATRICK RICE (his blood),
ARTHUR ABBOTT.

But nothing came of it. The Honourable Fortescue went on his way quite unmoved and treated us just as usual, without any sign of forgiveness or otherwise. And whether he ever reported our names to Dunston or not, we never knew. But I don't think he did. At any rate, he must have said the apology was enough; which it certainly was. And the end justified the means, as they say, because the whole holiday at half-term passed off as usual.

THE COUNTRYMAN OF KANT

Dr. Dunston had a way of introducing a new chap to the school after prayers. The natural instinct of a new chap, of course, is to slide in quietly and slowly settle down, first in his class and then in the school; but old Dunston doesn't allow this. When a new boy turns up, he jaws over him, and prophesies about him, and says we shall all like him, and so on; and if the new chap's father is anybody, which he sometimes happens to be, then Dunston lets us know it. The result is

that he generally puts everybody off a new chap from the first; but the Fifth and Sixth allow for this. As Travers major pointed out, it's a rum instinct of human nature to hate anything you are ordered to like, and to scoff at anything you are ordered to admire; so, thanks to Travers, who is frightfully clever in his way, and, in fact, going to Woolwich next term, we always allowed for the Doctor's great hope about a new boy, and didn't let it put us off him. As a matter of fact, Dunston often withdrew the praise afterwards, and we noticed, for some queer reason, that if a boy had a celebrated father, he always turned out to be the sort that Dunston hated most; and often and often, when he had to rag or flog that sort of boy, the Doctor fairly wept to think what the boy's celebrated father would say if he could see him now.

When Jacob Wundt came to Merivale, Dunston just went the limit about him; and it was all the more footling because Wundt grinned, and evidently highly approved of what was said about him. He was the first German the Doctor had ever had for a pupil, I believe--anyway, the first in living memory--so, perhaps, naturally he got a bit above himself about it; and Wundt got a bit above himself, too.

"In Jacob Wundt we embrace one from the Hamlet among nations," began Dr. Dunston. "In Jacob Wundt we welcome the countryman of Kant and Schiller, the contemporary of Eucken and Harnack! Moreover, Colonel von Wundt, his esteemed parent, occupies a position of some importance in the Fatherland, and has done no small part to perfect the magnificent army that great nation is known to possess."

Well, we looked at Jacob Wundt, and saw one of the short, fat sort, with puddingy limbs and yellowish hair close-cropped, and a fighting sort of head. He looked straight at you, but he never looked at anybody as though he liked them, and we jolly soon found he didn't.

As to Dr. Dunston's German heroes, we only knew one name, and that was Schiller; but as the Fifth and Sixth happened to be swotting "The Robbers" for an exam., and as "The Robbers" happens to be a ripping good thing in its way, we were not disinclined to be friendly to Wundt, as far as the Fifth and Sixth can be friendly to a new boy low in the school.

We soon found that Wundt was very un-English in his ideas, also in his manners and customs. He could talk English well enough to explain what he meant, and we soon found that he thought a jolly sight too well of Germany and a jolly sight too badly of England. At first we thought he had been sent to Merivale to make him larger-minded, so that he could go back and make other Germans more larger-minded, too. But he said it was nothing of the kind. He hadn't come to England to learn our ways--which were beastly, in his opinion--but to get perfect in our language, which might be useful to him when he became

a soldier.

He was very peculiar, and did things I never knew a boy do before. And the most remarkable thing he did was always to be looking on ahead to when he was grown up. Of course, everybody knows they're going to grow up, and some chaps are even keen about it in a sort of way, but very few worry about it like Wundt did. I said to him once--

"What the dickens are you always wanting time to pass for, so that you may be grown up? I can tell you it isn't all beer and skittles being a man. At any rate, I've often heard my father say he wishes he was young again."

"He may," answered Wundt. "You've told me your father was an 'International' and a 'Blue,' and no doubt he'd like to excel at football again. But I despise games, and I've got very good reasons for wanting to grow up, which are private."

Of course, he didn't put it in such good English as that, but that was the sense of it.

He wasn't what you call a success generally, for he didn't like work, except history; and he hated our history, and there wasn't much doing at Merivale in the matter of German history. But he took to English well, and would always talk it if he could get anybody to listen, which wasn't often. He said it was all rot about English being a difficult language. He thought it easy and feeble at best. All his people could speak it--in fact, everybody in Germany could, when it suited them to do so.

As for games, he had no use for them; but he was sporting in his own way. His favourite sport consisted in going out of bounds; and he showed very decent strategy in doing so, and gave even Norris and Booth a tip or two. Norris and Booth had made a fair art of trespassing in private game preserves, at the Manor House and other such places round about Merivale. In fact, game preserves were just common or garden Sunday walks to them. But they had been caught by a gamekeeper once and both flogged; and Wundt showed them how a reverse like that need never have happened. He could turn his coat inside out, and do other things of that sort, which were very deceptive even to the trained gamekeeper eye; and, finding a scarecrow in a turnip field, he took it, and as it consisted of trousers and coat and an old billycock hat, Wundt was now in possession of a complete disguise. He hid the things in a secret haunt, that really belonged to Norris and Booth; and they liked him at first and helped him a good deal; but finally they quarrelled with him, because he said England was a swine's hole, and told them that a time was coming--he hoped not till he grew up--when England would simply be a Protectorate of Germany, whatever that is. So they invited him to fight whichever he liked of them, and when he refused, though just the right weight, they smacked his head and dared him to go to their secret cave again.

When they smacked his head, his eyes glittered and he smiled, but nothing

more. He never would fight with fists, because he said only apes and Englishmen fought with Nature's weapons. But at single-stick he was exceedingly good, and, in fact, better than anybody in the school but Forrester. He much wished we could use swords and slash each other's faces, as he hoped to do when he became a student in his own country, and he said it was a mean sight to see old Dunston and Brown and Manwaring and Hutchings and the other masters all without a scratch. He said in Germany every self-respecting man of the reigning classes was gashed to the bone; and decent people wouldn't know a man who wasn't, because he was sure to be a shopkeeper or some low class thing like that. As to games, he held them in great contempt. It seems people of any class in Germany only play one game and that's the war game--*Kriegspiel*, he called it.

I said: "What the deuce is the good of always playing the war game if you're not going to war?"

And he said: "*Ach!*"

It was a favourite word of his, and he used it in all sorts of ways with all sorts of expressions. Forbes, who, like me, had a kind of interest in Wundt that almost amounted to friendship, asked him if women played the war game, and he said he didn't know what they played except the piano. All women were worms, in his opinion. Of course, he gassed about everything German, and said that, from science and art and music to matchboxes and sausages, his country was first and the rest nowhere. He joined our school cadet corps eagerly, and became an officer of some sort in a month; but he was fearfully pitying about it, and said that English ways of drilling were enough to make a cat laugh, or words to that effect. After he became an officer, he put on fearful side, though as just one of the rank and file he'd been quite humble; and then, when he ordered Saunders, who wasn't an officer, to do something out of drill hours, and Saunders told him to do it himself, he turned white and dashed at Saunders, who, of course, licked him on the spot and made his nose bleed. He was properly mad about that, and said that if it had happened in Germany, Saunders would have been shot; but as it happened in England, of course Saunders wasn't. Travers major tried to explain to Wundt that we weren't real soldiers, and that, when not with the cadet corps, he was no better than anybody else, but he couldn't see this. He said that in his country if you were once an officer, you were always an officer, and that there was a gulf fixed between the men and their officers; and he called Saunders "cannon fodder" to Batson; and when Batson told Saunders, Saunders made Wundt carry him on his back up to the gym., and there licked him again and made his nose bleed once more, much to his wrath.

On the whole, owing to his ideas, which he wouldn't keep to himself, Wundt didn't have too good a time at Merivale. He couldn't understand us, and said we were slackers and rotters, and that our mercenary army was no good, and that

Germany was the greatest country in the world, and we'd live to know it--perhaps sooner than we thought. Travers major tried hard to explain to him how it was, but he couldn't or wouldn't understand.

Travers said: "It's like this. Germany takes herself too seriously and other countries not seriously enough. An Englishman is always saying his own country is going to the dogs, and his Army's rotten, and his Navy only a lot of old sardine tins that ought to be scrapped, and all that sort of thing. That's his way, and when you bally Germans hear us talk like that, you go and believe it, and don't understand it's our national character to run ourselves down. And you chaps always go to the other extreme and brag about your army, and your guns, and your discipline, and your genius, and all the rest of it; and, of course, we don't believe you in the least, because gas like that carries its own reward, and nobody in the world could be so much better than all the rest of the world as you think you are. And if you imagine, because we run ourselves down, we would let anybody else dare to run us down, you're wrong. And if you think our free army is frightened of your slave army, and would mind taking you on, ten to one, on land or sea, you're also wrong."

It was a prophecy in a way, though Travers little knew it, for the war broke out next holidays, and when we went back to school, it was in full swing. And so, naturally, was Wundt. He wasn't going home for the vac. in any case, but stopping at Merivale, and he had done so. He told me the Doctor had talked some piffle to him about the duties of non-combatants; but, as Wundt truly said, every German in the world is a combatant in time of war, and if you can't do one thing, you must try and do another. In fact, old Dunston little knew the German character, and when he found it out, he was a good bit astonished, not to say hurt.

He, however, discovered it jolly quickly, and I did first of all, because, owing to being rather interested in human nature, I encouraged Wundt in a sort of way, and let him talk to me, and tried to see things from his point of view, as far as I could--that is, without doing anything unsporting to England. The great point was to keep your temper with Wundt; and, of course, most chaps couldn't, because he was so beastly sure he was right--at least, his nation was. But I didn't mind all that humbug, and found, by being patient with him, that, under all this flare-up, he was what you might call deadly keen on his blessed Fatherland. He fairly panted with patriotism, and in these moments, quite ignored my feelings.

"Now you know why I wanted to grow up," he said to me. "I hoped this wouldn't have happened till I could be in it. But it will be all over and your country a thing of the past before I'm sixteen--worse luck!"

As he was going to be sixteen in October, that was a bit hopeful of Wundt. His father or somebody had stuffed him up that Germany was being sat on by the world, and couldn't stand it much longer; and after the war began, he honestly

believed that it was the end of England, and, in a way, he was more decent than ever he'd been before. When we came back at the end of the holidays, Wundt welcomed me in a very queer sort of manner. Somebody had treated me just the same in the past, and, after trying for a week to think who it was, I remembered it was my Uncle Samuel, after I'd lost my mother. Wundt evidently felt sorry for all of us in general and for me in particular as his special friend.

"Of course," he said, "I can't pretend I didn't want it to happen; but you won't see it is for the good of the world that your country's got to go down. And so I'm sorry for you, if anything."

"Do you really think it has got to go down?" I asked Wundt, and he said it wasn't so much what he thought as what was bound to take place.

"Either England's got to go, or else Germany," he said, "and as the Teuton is the world-power for religion and culture and everything that really matters, and also miles strongest, England's naturally got to go. You've had your turn; now it's ours. The Kaiser speaks, Germany listens and obeys."

Booth asked him what day the Germans would be at Merivale, and if he'd got a plan of campaign marked out; and he said about the half-term holiday, or earlier, they would come. And Booth said that would mean a short term, anyway, which had its bright side.

Then Tracey, who is awful sarcastic, though it doesn't generally come off, asked Wundt how he had arrived at this idea, and Wundt said from reading papers that his father had sent him via Holland.

"Your papers are chockful of lies," he said. "If you want the truth, those of you who can read German can see it in my papers."

Of course, some of the Sixth could read German, and they borrowed his papers, and were much surprised that Wundt really believed such absolute rot against the evidence of our papers. But he was simply blind, and went so far as to say that he'd sooner believe the pettiest little German rag than all our swaggerest papers, let alone the *Merivale Weekly Trumpet*, which was fearfully warlike, because the editor had a son who was training for the Front.

But most of all, Wundt hated *Punch*, and, finding this out, we used to slip the cartoons into his desk, and put them under his pillow, and arrange them elsewhere where he must find them. These made him fairly foam at the mouth, and he said he hoped the first thing the Germans would do, when they got to London, would be to go to *Punch* and put the men who drew the pictures and made the jokes to the sword.

No doubt it was because they were so jolly true.

The masters were very decent to Wundt, especially Fortescue, who saw how trying it must be for him, living in an enemy's country; and when Wundt told me in secret that he felt his position was becoming unbearable, and that he had

written and asked if he could be exchanged for a prisoner, or something. He said in a gloomy sort of voice: "I may tell you I haven't wasted my time here, and perhaps some day Doctor Dunston and you chaps will know it to your cost."

Well, though friendly enough to Wundt, I didn't much like that, and told my own special chum, Manwaring, what he'd said; and Manwaring told me that in his opinion Wundt ought to be neutralised immediately. But I knew enough of Wundt to feel certain he could never be properly neutralised, because he had told me that once a German always a German, and that he'd rather be a dead German than a living King of England, and that if he had to stop in England for a million years, he'd still be as German as ever, if not more so. And he'd also fairly shaken with pride because he'd read somewhere that the Kaiser had said that he would give any doctor a hundred thousand marks if he would draw every drop of English blood out of his veins. And when he said it, Tracey had answered that if the Kaiser came over to England, there were plenty of doctors who would oblige him for half the money.

But now I thought, without any unkind feeling to Wundt, that I ought to tell Travers major, as head of the school, of his dark threats; and I did; and Travers thanked me and said I was quite right to tell him, because war is war, and you never know.

Of course, if Wundt was going to turn out to be a spy, it wasn't possible for me to be his friend, and I told him so. And he saw that. He said he was sorry, if anything, to lose my friendship, but he should always do all that he considered right in the service of his country, and he couldn't let me stand between him and his duty. Which amounted to admitting that he was a spy, or, at any rate, was trying to be one; for, of course, at Merivale a spy was no more use than he would have been at the North Pole. There was simply nothing to spy about, except the photographs of new girls on Brown's mantelpiece.

Then Travers made a move, and he was sorry to do it; but he was going to be a soldier, just as much as Wundt was, and though he never jawed about Woolwich like Wundt did about Potsdam, yet he was quite as military at heart; and though he didn't wear the English colours inside his waistcoat lining, like Wundt wore the German colours, as he admitted to me in a friendly moment, yet Travers felt just as keen about England as Wundt did about Germany, and quite as cast down when we heard about Mons as Wundt was when he heard about the retreat on the Marne. He pretended, of course, it was only strategy, but he knew jolly well it wasn't.

Then Travers major reluctantly decided that, with a spy, certain things must be done. He didn't like doing them, but they had to be done. And the first thing was to prove it.

"You can only prove a chap is a spy by spying yourself," Travers said, and

well knowing the peculiar skill of Norris and Booth, he told them to keep a careful lookout on Wundt and report anything suspicious; which they did do, because it was work to which they were well suited by their natures, and they soon reported that Wundt went long walks out of bounds, and evidently avoided people as much as possible. Once they surprised him making notes, and when he saw Booth coming, he tore them up.

Then Travers major did a strong thing, and ordered that the box of Wundt should be searched. I happened to know that Wundt was very keen to get a letter off by post, which he said was important, yet hesitated to send for fear of accidents; and that decided Travers.

So it was done, quite openly and without subterfuge, as they say, because we just took the key from Wundt by force and told him we were going to do it, and then did it. He protested very violently, but the protest, as Travers said, was not sustained.

And we found his box contained fearfully incriminating matter, for he had a one-barrelled breech-loading pistol in it, with a box of ammunition, of which we had never heard until that moment, and a complete map on a huge scale of Merivale and the country round. It was a wonderful map, and how he had made it, and nobody ever seen it, was extraordinary. At least, so it seemed, till we remembered that he had been here through the holidays on his own. There were numbers in red ink all over the map, and remarks carefully written in German; and though it is impossible to give you any idea of the map, which was beautifully drawn and about three yards square, if not more, yet I can reproduce the military remarks upon it, which Travers translated into English.

They went like this, and showed in rather a painful way what Wundt really was at heart. And it showed what Germany was, too; and no doubt thousands of other Germans all over the United Kingdom had been doing the same thing, and still are.

After the first shock of being discovered, I honestly believe he was pleased to be seen in his true colours, and gloried in his crime.

These were the notes in cold blood, as you may say:--

1. *A wood. Good cover for guns. In the middle is a spring where a gamekeeper's wife gets water. It might easily be poisoned.*

2. *A large number of fields. Some have potatoes in them and some have turnips.*

3. *A village with fifty or sixty houses and about two hundred and thirty-five inhabitants, mostly women and children. Presents no difficulties.*

4. *A church with a tower. A very good place for wireless or light gun. The pews inside would be good for wounded. Cover for infantry in the churchyard.*

5. *A stream with one bridge, which might easily be blown up; but it would not be necessary, as the stream is only six feet across, and you could easily walk over it. Too small for pontoons. Small fish in it.*

6. *A large field which was planted with corn, but is now empty. A good place for aeroplanes to land. Can't find out where corn is gone.*

7. *A railroad with one line that goes up to main line. Could easily be destroyed, but might have strategic value.*

8. *A hill where guns could be placed that would cover advance of troops on Merivale.*

9. *The school. This stands on rising ground a mile from the hill, No. 8, and could easily be destroyed by field-guns. Or it could easily be used as a hospital. It contains a hundred beds, and the chapel could easily hold a hundred more. There is a garden and a fountain of good water. Also a well in the house. The playing-field is a quarter of a mile off. Tents could easily be put up there for troops.*

10. *A village schoolroom three hundred yards from the church. It has been turned into a hospital for casualties. There are thirteen or fourteen nurses of the Red Cross waiting for wounded soldiers to arrive. They are amateurs, but have passed some sort of examination. The wounded are said to be coming. This place could easily be shelled from the hill marked No. 8.*

11. *A forest full of game, and in the middle of it a park and the Manor House, belonging to a man called Sir Neville Carew. He has great wealth, and the mansion could easily be looted, and then either used for officers or burned down.*

12. *A farm rich in sheep and cattle and chickens, also turkeys. It would present no difficulties.*

13. *The sea. This is distant ten miles from here, and there is an unfortified bay, which looks deep. We went there for a holiday last summer, and some of us went out in a boat. I pretended to fish and tried to take soundings, but regret to report that I failed. However, the water was quite deep enough for small battle-craft. The cliffs are red and made of hard rock. There are about twenty fishing-boats, and a coastguard station on top; but I saw no wireless. There is a semaphore.*

14. *A medical doctor's house with a garage. Would present no difficulties. I saw petrol tins in the yard.*

That was all, and Travers at once decided to hand the map and the pistol and cartridges to Doctor Dunston.

"I'm very unwilling to do it," he said, "but this is a bit too thick altogether. It is pure, unadulterated spying of the most blackguard sort. And if I had anything to do with it, I should fine Wundt every penny he's got and imprison him for six months and then deport him."

So he took the evidence of guilt to Dunston, and, of course, Dunston had the day of his life over them. Some of the masters considered it funny, and I believe Peacock, who translated the map for Dunston, thought it was rather fine of Wundt; but old Dunston didn't think it was funny, or fine, either. He had the whole school in chapel, and hung up the map on a blackboard, and waved the pistol first in one hand and then the other, and talked as only he can talk when he's fairly roused by a great occasion.

I believe what hurt him most was Wundt saying it would be so jolly easy to knock out Merivale; and to hear Wundt explaining how the school could be shelled fairly made old Dunston get on his hind legs. In his great moments he always quotes Shakespeare, and he did now. He said he wasn't going to have a serpent sting him twice, anyway. He also said it was enough to make Kant and Goethe turn in their graves; and, that for all he could see, they had expended their genius in vain, so far as their native land was concerned. And then he went on.

"Needless to say, Jacob Wundt, you are technically expelled. I say 'technically,' because, until I have communicated with your unfortunate father, it is impossible literally to expel you. To be expelled, a boy must be expelled from somewhere to somewhere, and for the moment there is nowhere that I know of to where you can be expelled. But rest assured that a way shall be found at the earliest opportunity. Indeed, it may be my duty to hand you over to the military authorities, and, should that be the case, I shall not hesitate. For the present you are interned."

Wundt merely said "*Ach!*" but he said it in such a fearfully contemptuous tone of voice that the Doctor flogged him then and there; and Travers major thought Wundt ought not to have been flogged by rights, but treated as a prisoner of war, or else shot--he didn't seem to be sure which.

And as for Wundt, he evidently thought the Belgian atrocities were a fool to his being flogged; and he got so properly wicked that the Doctor had him locked up all night, with nothing but bread and water to eat, and the gardener to guard him.

Then a good many chaps began to be sorry for Wundt; but their sorrow was wasted, for the very next day Dunston heard from his father that Wundt could go home through Holland, with two other German boys who were being looked after by the American Ambassador, or some such pot in London. So he went, and after he had gone, Fortescue asked the Doctor if he might have Wundt's map, as a psychological curiosity, or some such thing, and Dunston said he had burned the map to cinders, and seemed a good deal pained with Fortescue for wanting to treasure such an outrage.

Wundt promised to write to me when he left; but he never did, and, perhaps, if it's true that German boys of sixteen go to the Front, he may be there now. And

if he is, and if his side wins, and if Wundt is with the Germans when they come to Merivale, I know the first thing he'll do will be to slay old Dunston, and the second thing he'll do will be to slay Saunders.

But in the meantime, of course, there is a pretty rosy chance he may get slain himself. Not that he'd mind, if he knew his side was on top and going to conquer. Only, perish the thought, as they say.

TRAVERS MINOR, SCOUT

Before the fearful war with Germany began, Dr. Dunston was not very keen about us joining the Boy Scouts on half-holidays. He liked better for us to play games; and if you didn't play games, he liked you to go out with Brown to botanize in the hedges. It was a choice of evils to me and Travers minor, because we hated games and we fairly loathed botanizing with Brown. Unluckily for us, he was the Forum master of the Lower Fourth, and so we had more than enough of him in school, without seeing him pull weeds to pieces on half-holidays and talk about the wonders of Nature. For that matter, he was about the wonderfullest wonder of Nature himself, if he'd only known it.

But after the War began, old Dunston quite changed his attitude to the Boy Scouts, and, in some ways, that was the best thing that ever happened for me and Travers minor, though in other ways it was not.

I'm called Briggs, and Travers minor and I came the same term and chummed from the first. We had the same opinions about most things, and agreed about hating games and preferring a more solitary life; but we were very different in many respects, for Travers minor was going to be a clergyman, and I had no ideas of that sort, my father being a stock broker in the "Brighton A" market. Travers minor was more excitable than Travers major, though quite as keen about England, and after being divided for some time between the Navy and the Church, he rather cleverly combined the two professions, and determined to be the chaplain of a battleship. His enthusiasm for England was very remarkable, and after a time, though I had never been the least enthusiastic about England before, yet, owing to the pressure of Travers minor, I got to be. Nothing like he was, of course. He used to fairly tremble about England, and once, when an Irish boy, who didn't know Home Rule had been passed, said he'd just as soon blow his nose on the Union Jack as his handkerchief--which was rot, seeing he never had one--young

Travers flew at him like a tiger from a bow, and knocked him down and hammered the back of his head on the floor of the chapel. As soon as he had recovered from his great surprise, the Irish boy--Rice he was called--got up and licked Travers minor pretty badly, which he could easily do, being cock of the Lower School; but, all the same, Rice respected Travers, for doing what he did, and when he heard that Home Rule was passed, he said that altered the case, and never cheeked the English flag again.

Then Dunston changed towards the Boy Scouts, and said such of us as liked might join them; and about twenty did. We were allowed to hunt about in couples on half-holidays; and the rule for a Boy Scout is always to be on the look-out to justify his existence when scouting, and to assist people, and help the halt and the lame, and tell people the way if they want to know it, and buck about generally, and, if possible, never stop a bit of scouting till he's done a good action of some kind to somebody. Of course, we had to do our good actions in bounds, and Travers minor often pointed out, as a rather curious thing, that over and over again there were chances to do good actions if we'd gone out of bounds--sometimes even over a hedge into a field.

But he generally found something useful to do, and I generally didn't. The good action that occurred oftenest was to give pennies to tramps, but Travers did not support this. He said:

"I dare say you've noticed, Briggs, that all these chaps who ask us for money have got starving families at home. Well, if it's true, they ought to be at home looking after them. But it isn't true. As a rule, they spend the money on beer. And when you ask them why they haven't enlisted, they all say they're too short, or too tall, or haven't got any back teeth, or something."

We were scouting the day Travers minor pointed this out, and that was the very afternoon that we met the best tramp of the lot. I should have believed him myself and tried to help him; but Travers, strangely enough, is much kinder to animals and dumb creatures in general than he is to men, especially tramps, and it took a very clever tramp to make him believe him. But this one did.

He was old and grizzled and grey, and his moustache was yellow with tobacco. He was sitting rolling a cigarette in the hedge, and as we passed together in uniform with our scout poles, he got up and saluted us with a military salute.

"What a bit of luck!" he said. "You're just the chaps I'm on the look-out for."

Travers stopped and so did I.

"D'you want anything, my good man?" said Travers.

"Yes, I do. I want a sharp Boy Scout to listen to me. I'm telling secrets, mind you; but you're in the Service just as much as I am, and I can trust you."

"What Service?" asked Travers minor. "What Service are you in?"

"The Secret Service," said the tramp. "I dare say you think I'm only a bad-

gering old loafer, and not worth the price of the boots on my feet. Far from it. I'm Sir Baden-Powell's brother! That's why I was glad to see you boys come along."

"I don't believe it," said Travers.

"Quite right not to," answered the old man. "That is, till I explain. As you know, the country's fairly crawling with German spies at present, and it takes a pretty good chap to smell them out. That's my game. I've run down thirty-two during the last month, and I'm on the track of a lot more; but to keep up my character of an old tramp, I dress like this; and then they don't suspect me, and I just meet 'em in pubs and stand 'em drinks, and tip 'em a bit of their lingo and pretend I'm German, too."

I was a good deal impressed by this, and so was Travers minor.

"I've been standing drinks to a doubtful customer only this morning, and spent my last half-crown doing it," went on the great Baden-Powell's brother. "That's why I stopped you boys. I'm a good way from my base for the moment, and I shall be obliged if you can lend me half a sovereign, or whatever you've got on you, till to-morrow. If you let me have your address, you shall get it by midday; and I'll mention your names to 'B.-P.' next time we meet."

Travers minor looked at the spy in a spellbound sort of way.

"It's a wonderful disguise," he said.

"Not one of my best, though," answered the man. "I never look the same two days running. Very likely to-morrow I shall be a smart young officer; and then, again, I may look like a farmer, or a clergyman, or anything. It's part of my work to be a master of the art of disguises."

Travers minor began to whisper to me, and asked me how much money I had. Then the great spy spoke again.

"I might give you boys a job next Saturday afternoon, but you'll have to be pretty smart to do it. I'm taking a German then. I've marked him down at Little Mudborough--you know, a mile from Merivale--and on Saturday next, at 'The Wool Pack' public-house, I meet him and arrest him. I shall want a bit of help, I dare say."

Travers fairly trembled with excitement after that. Then he felt in his pocket and found he'd only got a shilling, and this he gave to the spy without a thought; but I happened to have five shillings by an extraordinary fluke, it being my birthday, and Brown had changed a postal order from my mother; so I was not nearly so keen about the spy as Travers minor. Travers was a good deal relieved to hear I'd got as much, and even then apologised that we could only produce six bob between us.

The spy seemed rather disappointed, and I made a feeble effort to keep my five shillings by saying:

"Couldn't you get to the police-station? They'd be sure to have tons of

money there."

But at the mention of a police-station he showed the utmost annoyance, combined with contempt. He said: "What's your name?"

And I said: "Briggs."

"Well, Briggs," he said, "let me tell you, if there's one thing the Secret Service hates and despises more than another, it's a police-station; and if there's one bigger fool on earth than another, it's a policeman. It would very likely be death to my whole career as a spy, if I went to a policeman and told him who I was."

"Don't you ever work with them, Mr. Baden-Powell?" asked Travers; and he said:

"Never, if I can help it."

So he had the six bob, much to my regret, and told us to be at "The Wool Pack" public-house at Mudborough on the following Saturday afternoon. He asked what would be the most convenient time for us to be there, and we said half-past three, and he said "Good!"

Then Travers asked rather a smart question and said--

"How shall we know you?"

And the spy said:

"I shall be disguised as a farmer, in gaiters and the sort of clothes farmers go to market in on Saturdays; and I shall be in the bar with other men. And one of these men will be a very dangerous German secret agent, who has a 'wireless' at his house. And when we've got him, we shall go to his house and destroy the 'wireless.' And now you'd better be getting on, or people will think it suspicious. And you shall have your money again next Saturday."

So we left him, and the six shillings with him, and I was by no means so pleased and excited about it as Travers minor. Still, I was excited in a way, and hoped the following Saturday would be glorious; and Travers said it would undoubtedly be the greatest day we had spent up to that time.

We had gone two hundred yards, and were wondering what the German would look like, and if he'd make a fight, when we were much startled by a man who suddenly jumped out of the hedge and stopped us.

It was a policeman in a very excited frame of mind.

"What did that bloke up the road say to you?" he began; and Travers minor, remembering what contempt the great spy had for policemen, was rather haughty.

"Our conversation was private," he answered, and the policeman seemed inclined to laugh.

"I know what your conversation was, very well," he answered. "Soapy William wouldn't tire himself talking to you kids for fun. Did you give him any money?"

In this insolent way the policeman dared to talk of Baden-Powell's brother!

"His name is not Soapy William," answered Travers, who had turned red with anger, "and he's got no use for policemen, anyway."

"No, you take your dying oath he hasn't," said the policeman. "If he told you that, he's broke the record and told you the truth. Did you give him money, or only a fag?'

"We lent him money for a private purpose, and I'll thank you to let us pass," said Travers minor.

But the policeman wouldn't.

"He's as slippery as an eel," he said, "and I've been waiting to cop him red-'anded for a fortnight. So now you'd better come and overtake him, for he's lame and can only crawl along. And when I talk to him, you'll be surprised."

"You're utterly wrong," Travers minor told the policeman. "You're quite on the wrong scent, and if you interfere with that man, you'll very likely ruin your own career in the Force. He's much more powerful than you think."

But the policeman said he'd chance that, and then, in the name of the law, he made us come and help him.

It was a most curious experience. When we got there, the spy had disappeared, and the policeman, knowing that he could only go about one mile an hour, said he must be hidden somewhere near.

"And if you chaps are any good as scouts, now's your chance to show it," he said.

By this time I began to believe the policeman, for he was a big man and very positive in his speech; but Travers hated him, and if he'd found the spy, I believe he would have said nothing. But I found him, or, rather, I found his boot. He had, no doubt, seen us stopped by the policeman, and then hastened to evade capture. There was a haystack in a field, and he had gone to it, and on one side, where it was cut open, there was a lot of loose hay, and he had concealed himself with the utmost cunning, all but one boot. This I observed just peeping out from a litter of loose hay, and not feeling equal to making the capture myself, I pretended I had not seen the boot, and went off and told the policeman, who was hunting some distance off, and also eating blackberries while he hunted.

He was much pleased and hastened to make the capture; and when he arrived and he saw the boot, he said: "Hullo, Soapy, old pard! Got you this time, my boy!"

Then the hay was cast aside, and the great spy; otherwise known as Soapy William, rose up.

It was rather a solemn sight in a way, for he took it pretty calmly, and said he'd been wanting a fortnight's rest for a long time.

After the capture, the policeman seemed to lose interest in Travers minor and me. In fact, he didn't even thank us, but he gave us back our money, and it

was rather interesting to find that Soapy William, besides our six shillings, had the additional sum of two and sevenpence halfpenny also.

Travers minor didn't speak one single word, going back to Merivale, until we were at the gates; then he said a thing which showed how fearfully he felt what had happened.

He said:

"It makes me feel almost in despair about going into the Church, Briggs, when there's such wickedness as that about."

And I said:

"I should think you would want to go in all the more."

And afterwards, when we had changed and had tea, and we were in school, he got calmer and admitted I was right.

But he took a gloomier view of human nature afterwards, and often, on scouting days, he said there was more satisfaction in helping a beetle across a road, or making a snail safe, than there was in trying to be useful to one's fellow-creatures.

We had to go and give evidence against Soapy William before a Justice of the Peace two days later. In fact, it was Sir Neville Carew, who lived at the Manor House, and he seemed to be very much amused at our evidence, and almost inclined to let Soapy off. But he gave him a fortnight, and Soapy said to us as he 'oped we'd let the great Baden-Powell know how he was being treated; and everybody laughed, including Brown, who had gone to the court with us.

But, after that, Dr. Dunston cooled off to the Boy Scouts a lot; and when the terrific adventure to Travers minor finally occurred, about three weeks after, Travers major said it was a Nemesis on old Dunston; and so undoubtedly it was.

Though not actually in it, I heard all the particulars--in fact, everybody did, for naturally Dr. Dunston was the most famous person in Merivale, and when this remarkable thing overtook him, The *Merivale Weekly Trumpet* had a column about it, and everybody for miles round called to see him and say how jolly glad they were it wasn't worse.

It was a fierce afternoon, with the leaves flying and the rain coming down in a squally sort of way, and Travers minor and I went for a drill, and after the drill we scouted a bit on rather a lonely road where nothing was in the habit of happening. But, as Travers truly said, the essence of scouting is surprise, and because a road is a lonely and uneventful sort of road, it doesn't follow something may not happen unexpectedly upon it.

He said:

"No doubt the roads in the valley of the river Aisne, in France, have been pretty lonely in their time, but think of them last September!"

So we went, and one motor passed us in two miles; and two dogs poaching

together also passed, and in a field was a sheep which had got on its back and couldn't get up again, being too fat to do so. We pulled it up. In another field was a bull, and we tried to attract it, and scouted down a hedge within fifty yards of it, to see if it was dangerous, and warn people if it was; and I went to within forty yards of it, being a good twelve yards from the hedge at the time, but it paid no attention. Then, just at the end of the road, we came across an old woman sitting by the roadside in a very ragged and forlorn condition, with a basket of watercresses and also about twelve mushrooms.

Thinking she might be lame, or otherwise in difficulties, Travers minor went up to her and said:

"Good evening! D'you want anything?"

And she said:

"Yes, a plucky lot of things, but none of your cheek."

"It wasn't meant for cheek. I'm a Scout," said Travers minor.

And she said:

"Oh, run along home and ask mother to let out your knickers, else you'll bust 'em!"

Travers turned white with indignation, but such was his great idea of discipline, that he didn't tell her she was a drunken old beast, which she was, but just marched off. But he was fearfully upset, all the same, and, instead of pouring out his rage on the horrid old woman, he poured it out on me. He'd been a bit queer all day, owing to a row with Brown over a history lesson, in which Travers minor messed up the story of Charles II; and now, what with one thing and another, he lost his usual self-control and got very nasty.

He said scouting with another person was no good--not with me, anyway.

And I said:

"What have I done?"

And he said:

"You're such a fathead--nothing ever happens when you're about!"

I told him to keep his temper and not make a silly ass of himself. I also asked him what he thought was going to happen. I said:

"We all know you're always ready for anything--from an Uhlan to a caterpillar--but it seems to me the essence of scouting is to keep wide awake when nothing is happening, like the fleet in the North Sea. Any fool can do things; the thing is always to be ready to do them, and not get your shirt out and lose your nerve because there's nothing to do."

This good advice fairly settled Travers minor. He undoubtedly lost his temper, as he admitted afterwards, and he said:

"When I want you to tell me my business, Briggs, I'll let you know."

And I said:

"Your first business is to keep your hair on, whatever happens."

And he said:

"Then I'll relieve you of my company, Briggs."

And, before I could answer, he had got through the hedge and gone off over a field which ran along a wood. I watched him in silent amazement, as they say, and he crossed the field and entered the wood and disappeared.

This action alone showed what a proper rage he was in, because he had gone into the Manor Woods, which was not only going out of bounds, but also trespassing--two things he never did. It was a fearful loss of nerve, and I stood quite still for a good minute after he vanished. Then my first idea was to go and lug him back; but discretion was always the better part of valour with me, and always will be, owing to my character; so I left Travers to his fate, and hoped he'd soon cool down and come back without meeting a keeper. It was growing dusk, too, and I went back to Merivale, and decided not to say anything about Travers minor, except that, while we were engaged in some scouting operations, I had missed him.

I only heard the amazing tale of his adventure afterwards, and though everybody had the story in some shape or form, I got the naked truth from Travers minor himself in his own words. Next morning, much to our surprise, it was given out that Dr. Dunston was unwell, and Fortescue read prayers; and during that event Travers told me all.

"When I left you," he said, "I was in a filthy bate, and for once, instead of not wanting to trespass and break bounds, I did want to. And I went straight into the Manor Woods, and badly frightened some pheasants that had gone to roost, and was immediately soothed. They made a fearful row, and I thought a keeper would be sure to spring up from somewhere, and rather hoped one would, in order to afford me an opportunity for an escape. But nothing happened, and I decided to walk on till I came to the drive, and then boldly go along out of the lodge-gate. Well, I walked through the wood to the drive just before it got dark. I was looking out cautiously from the edge of the wood, to see that all was clear, when I observed a man sitting on the edge of the drive. For a moment I thought it was that wretched Soapy William again. He was humped up and nursing his foot which was evidently badly wounded. Then the man gave a sound between a sigh and a groan and a snuffle, and I saw it was Dr. Dunston!

"Of course, it was the moment of my life, and I felt, in a sort of way, that my whole future career depended upon my next action. My first instinct, remembering that Norris and Booth were both flogged when caught here, was a strategic retreat; but then my duty as a Boy Scout occurred to me. It was a fearful choice of evils, you may say; for if I cleared out, I was disgraced for ever, and my mind couldn't have stood it, and if I went forward, I was also disgraced for ever, because

to be flogged, to a chap with my opinions, is about the limit. I considered what should be done, and while I was considering, old Dunston groaned again and said out loud:

"'Tut--tut! This is indeed a tragedy!'

"That decided me, because the question of humanity came in, and looking on into the future in rather a remarkable way, I saw at once that if I retreated and heard next morning that old Dr. Dunston was found dead, I should feel the pangs of remorse for evermore, and they would ruin my life. I also felt that, if I saved him, he was hardly likely to flog me, because there would undoubtedly be a great feeling against him if he did."

"You might have done this," I said. "You might have retreated, and then gone down to the lodge and told the woman that there was an injured man, in great agony, lying half-way up the drive. You might have given a false name yourself, and then, when the rescuing party started, you might have cleared out and so remained anonymous. It would have gone down to the credit of the Boy Scouts, and old Dunston would have been the first to see that the particular Boy Scout in question preferred, for private reasons, to keep his identification a secret."

Travers was much impressed by this view.

"I never thought of that," he said. "Probably, if I had, I should have done it. Anyway, I'm sorry I swore at you and called you a fathead, Briggs. You're not a fathead--far from it."

He then continued his surprising narrative in these words:

"Anyway, I decided to rescue the Doctor, and stepped out of ambush and said:

"'Good evening, sir. I'm afraid you're hurt.'

"He was evidently very glad to see me; but you know his iron discipline. He kept it up even then.

"'What boy are you?' he asked, and I told him I was Travers minor from Merivale.

"'And how comes it you are here?' he asked again.

"'I was operating in the woods on my way home, sir, and I heard your cry of distress.'

"'We will investigate your operations on another occasion, then,' said the Doctor. 'For the moment mine are more important. I have had a bad fall and am in great pain. You had better run as quickly as possible to the Manor House, ask to see Sir Neville Carew, and tell him that I have met with a very severe accident half-way down his drive. Whether I have broken my leg, or put out my ankle, it is not for me to determine. I have been drinking tea with Sir Neville and learning his views as to the War. Be as quick as you can. You will never have a better opportunity to display your agility.'

"Then I hooked it and ran the half-mile or so to the Manor House, sprinting all the way. I soon gave the terrible news, and in about ten minutes Sir Neville Carew himself, with his butler and his footman, set off for the Doctor. And the footman trundled a chair which ran on wheels, and which Sir Neville Carew kindly explained to me he uses himself when he gets an attack of gout, which often happens, unfortunately.

"He didn't ask me how I discovered the accident, which was naturally rather a good thing for me; and when we got back to the Doctor, he told me to hasten on in advance and break the evil tidings. So I cleared out. And I've heard no more yet; but no doubt I shall soon."

That was the great narrative of Travers minor, and after morning school Brown gave out that the Doctor's ankle was very badly sprained, but that things would take their course as usual, and a bulletin be put up on the notice-board in the evening.

And it was, and it said the Doctor was better.

Travers minor heard nothing until three days later, when the Doctor appeared on a crutch and read prayers. Then he had Travers up and addressed the school. And Travers saw at a glance that Dr. Dunston was still in no condition to flog him, even if the will was there.

It ended brilliantly for Travers, really, because the Doctor said he had been an instrument of Providence, and he evidently felt you ought not to flog an instrument of Providence, whatever he's been doing. He reproved Travers minor pretty stiffly, all the same, and said that when he considered what a friend Sir Neville Carew was to the school, and how much he overlooked, and so on, it was infamous that any boy should even glance into his pheasant preserves, much less actually go into them. And Travers minor was finally ordered to spend a half-holiday in visiting Sir Neville Carew and humbly apologizing to him for his conduct. Which he did so, and Sir Neville Carew, on hearing from Travers that he would never do it again on any pretext whatever, was frightfully sporting and forgave him freely, and talked about the War, and reminded him about Sir Baden-Powell's brother, and ended by taking Travers minor into a glass-house full of luscious peaches and giving him two.

And Travers kept one for me, because, he said, if it hadn't been for getting into a wax with me, he would never have trespassed and never have had the adventure at all.

And I said it wasn't so much me as that beast of an old woman who told him his knickers were too tight.

"In strict honesty," I said, "she ought to have this peach."

Then I ate it, and never want to eat a better. In fact, I kept the stone to plant

when I went home.

THE HUTCHINGS TESTIMONIAL

Naturally, all Merivale was deeply interested in the adventures of Mr. Hutchings at the Front of the War. Of the three masters who had instantly volunteered, only Hutchings had actually gone to the Front, being a skilled territorial and holding a commission in the Devons; but the other two, Manwaring and Meadows, had to be content with Kitchener's Army, because they were ignorant of the subject of warfare and had to begin at the beginning. Of course, Fortescue would have proudly gone, as his splendid poems on the war and his general valiant feelings showed, and we were very sorry we had misunderstood him; but his aorta being a bit off quite prevented him doing anything except write splendid poems urging everybody else to go; and no doubt many did go because of them. As for Brown, he was five feet nothing, or thereabouts, and so he wasn't wanted, and I believe in secret he thanked God for it, though in public he said it was the bitterest blow of his life. And Rice, who doesn't fear Brown, asked him why he didn't join a Ghurka regiment; and Brown said nothing would have given him greater pleasure, only, unfortunately, owing to caste, and religion, and one thing and another, it was out of the question. He appeared to bar the bantam regiment also, probably not so much as the bantam regiment would have barred him.

So you may say Merivale only had one man at the positive Front, though Jenny Dunston, the Doctor's youngest daughter but two, was engaged to a man in the Welsh Fusiliers, and he was there, and Abbott's father was also there. They were, of course, nothing to us, though no doubt a good deal to Jenny Dunston and Abbott's mother; but all our excitement centred on Hutchings, who was a lieutenant, and was often believed to do the work of a captain when actually under fire. He occasionally sent a postcard to Fortescue, saying that all was well, and I believe Fortescue also got a letter with pieces censored out of it; but he did not show it to us, though he told Travers minor and Briggs that it was anxious work. This was when the British Expedition was falling back, much to its regret. But soon the time came when they got going forward again, and then Fortescue bucked up and, I believe, wrote his best poetry. In fact, Fortescue really was a sort of weather-glass of the War, if you understand me, and chaps in his class said that, after a reverse, you could do simply anything with him, and he didn't seem

to have the slightest interest in work, and didn't care if you were right or wrong. And in a way it was equally all right for his class after a victory, for then he was so hopeful and pleased that he never came down on anybody. So we hadn't got to read the papers, because, after seeing Fortescue in the morning, we always knew the general hang of the War. In fact, Mitchell, who was a cunning student of other people's characters, though his own was beastly, said that you had only got to look at Fortescue's neck to know how it was going at the Front. If his head was hanging over his chest, it was certain the Allies had had a nasty knock; and if it was just about normal, you knew nothing had happened to matter either way; and if it was thrown up and straight, and Fortescue's eyes were bright behind his glasses, then you knew that we had scored, or else the French or Russians had. Then a little child could lead Fortescue, as Mitchell said.

And at last came Hill No. 60, and the fearfully sad news that Hutchings was dead or wounded; and many of us would have given a week's pocket-money to know which. Then came the good news under the Roll of Honour that he was only wounded, and after that, many of us would have given a week's pocket-money to know where. Presently we heard from Dr. Dunston that he was in Paris; and then we heard that he was coming to England and going to the private house of some very sporting rich people who had turned their mansion into a hospital for wounded officers.

Then Fortescue heard from Hutchings, and most kindly gave us the information that he had been wounded in two places--the shoulder and the calf of the right leg. And we were thankful that it was no worse.

We were allowed to write to Hutchings, and Barrington, who was head boy now that Travers major had left, composed a letter, and everybody signed it. And I hope he liked it. But then came the great idea of a presentation to Hutchings. I am Blades, and it was my idea, though afterwards Sutherland and Thwaites claimed it. But I promise you it was mine, and we had a meeting in chapel one night before prep., at which Barrington proposed and I seconded the great thought that we should make a collection of money for a memorial to Hutchings.

Barrington said:

"We are met together for a good object, namely, to collect money for a valuable memorial of his bravery in the War for Mr. Hutchings, or I should say Lieutenant Hutchings. Everybody here--even his own class--likes him; and the new boys, who do not know him, would equally like him if they did. No doubt there will be a very fine medal of Hill No. 60 struck and presented to our troops who were in that terrific battle, and no doubt Lieutenant Hutchings will get it; but it often takes years and years before war medals are struck and presented to the heroes of a battle, and I have heard that some of the medals from the Battle of Waterloo are still hanging fire; and many ought to have had them who died a nat-

ural death long before they were sent out. So I propose that we make a collection for Mr. Hutchings and present him with a valuable object before he goes back to the War, because, if we leave it till afterwards, it may be too late."

And I said:

"I beg to second the excellent speech we have just heard, and if anybody is of a different opinion, let him say so."

It was carried.

Then Barrington said we must have a committee of management, with a secretary and treasurer, and it was done.

The committee consisted of me and Barrington and Sutherland and Thwaites; and Rice, who would not have been on such an important thing in the ordinary way, was proposed, because he was enormously popular and would be able to persuade many to subscribe who would not otherwise do so without great pressure. That only left the treasurer, and well knowing Mitchell's financial skill and mastery of arithmetic in general, I proposed him. Some chaps, who owed Mitchell money, were rather shy of voting for him; but finally they decided it was better to have him for a friend than an enemy, and so they voted in his favour. I myself owed Mitchell three shillings, for which I was paying twopence a week, which was a fair interest. And personally I always found him honourable, though firm.

Anyway, he was made treasurer, and he said the subscription lists must be posted in a public place, because in these cases people liked to see their names where other people would also see them, and that publicity was the backbone of philanthropy.

We left it with him, as he thoroughly understood that branch of the testimonial, and meanwhile from time to time the committee met to consider what ought to be bought. And we differed a good deal on the subject. I thought, as Hutchings would certainly go back to the War when he was well, we ought to buy him a complete outfit of comforts, including blankets, tobacco--of which he was very fond--a Thermos flask, a wool helmet, day socks, night socks, a mouth-guard to keep out German stinks, and, in fact, everything to help him through the misery of warfare, including a filter for drinking water. And Sutherland was rather inclined to agree with me, but the others were not.

Thwaites said:

"My dear Blades, you talk as if you were his grandmother. No doubt he's got women relations to look after paltry things like that; but a testimonial rises to a much higher plane, in my opinion. It ought to be something that will last for ever and not wear out and be forgotten."

And Rice said:

"Get the man a revolver."

And Barrington said:

"He's got one."

And Rice said:

"Of course he has. And if we get him another, then he'd have two, and that means six less Germans some day, very likely."

But Barrington didn't approve.

"We want a testimonial that has nothing to do with actual battle," he said. "The War won't last for ever, and we ought to buy something useful, and also ornamental, that Hutchings will be able to employ in everyday life when all is over. We want something that will catch his eye a hundred times a day and pleasantly remind him and his family of his heroic past--and us."

"An heirloom, in fact," said Thwaites.

But I argued that practical comforts at the critical moment would be far better than an heirloom for future use, because if he didn't have the mouth-guard and filter and so on, he might die; and where would the heirloom come in then?

I said:

"What's the good of knowing you've got a silver ink-pot, or a tea-kettle, or a cellaret full of whisky at home, when you're perishing for a wholesome drink on the field?"

And Barrington said that was petty, and so did Thwaites. They seemed to think that the remembrance of our testimonial safe at home would carry Hutchings safely through all the horrors of the campaign.

It turned out that I had rather touched up Barrington, for he had actually been thinking about a silver ink-pot, and Thwaites had been thinking about a cellaret with three bottles of various spirits; but I told them flatly I didn't agree with them. Then they asked Sutherland his idea, and he said it wasn't so much what we should like as what Hutchings would.

He said:

"Perhaps a very fine meerschaum pipe, mounted in silver with an inscription, would do, because there you have a creature comfort of the first class and also a testimonial which would not wear out. And a pipe would be far more to Hutchings, either in war or peace, than an ink-pot, or, in fact, anything of that sort."

And Rice said:

"Why not get the man a sword? He could use it in the War, and, if all went well, he could hang it up in his home afterwards; and if there was blood on it, then he'd have great additional pleasure every time he looked at it. And so would his family."

Barrington rather liked the sword; but he said classy swords were frightfully expensive, and he doubted whether we should run to it. Then the committee broke

up, to meet again when we found how the subscriptions came in.

Unfortunately, this department of the testimonial was very slow. Mitchell, with great trouble, wrote out a list of the whole school, and was allowed to put it on the notice-board. Class by class he wrote it--one hundred and thirty-two boys he wrote--with money columns and a line leading from each boy to the money column. On it, in large ornamental letters, Nicholson, who was a dab at printing, put the words--

TESTIMONIAL FUND TO LIEUTENANT
HUTCHINGS, FROM MERIVALE SCHOOL.

Then we all waited breathlessly for the result in the money column. There was some delay, because everybody, of course, wrote home on the subject and mentioned it in the next Sunday's letters; and we pointed out to the kids that a good and useful thing to write home about, and something at least to fill two pages, would be the Hutchings testimonial. Whether they made the appeal or not, of course, none could tell, but if they did, the response was fearfully feeble. When questioned, they said that their people at home had done such a frightful lot for the War already that further cash for Hutchings was out of the question; while other parents wrote back, not that they had done much for the War, but that the War had done much for them in a very unfavourable manner. The result was apparently the same in each case, and the Lower School, all except Peterson in the Third, responded very badly to the appeal. He produced ten bob, much to our amazement, and there was one other ten bob, secured by Abbott through his mother, because his father was at the Front and still unwounded. As for the Sixth, who headed the list, we all gave three bob to a man, except Barrington, who gave five. The Fifth came out at about one and tenpence a head, which was fair, without being particularly dazzling; but the Fourth fell away a good deal. And after that there was a hideous array of blanks.

Mitchell said it was probably owing to the utter failure of the dividends of the parents of the Lower School; and as we could not apparently make bricks without straw, we considered how to tackle the Lower School. There is no doubt the failure was genuine, for many of them had even their pocket-money reduced; so Pegram--who had only subscribed a shilling himself, by the way--proposed that the kids should be invited to give property instead of cash.

He said:

"If they all yield up something they value, we can collect the goods in a mass and have a sale, and the proceeds of the sale can go to the Hutchings Testimonial."

The committee approved of this, excepting Thwaites, who thought nothing of it; but when asked to give his objections, he merely said:

"Wait and see."

Which we did do, and found that Thwaites was wonderfully right, and had looked on ahead much farther than us. The kids agreed willingly to subscribe in goods, and were only too delighted to do so; but when it came to the point, the goods of the kids proved utterly worthless in the open market. It was a revelation, in a sort of a way, to see the things the kids valued and honestly thought were worth money. In fact, Preston said it was pathetic, and Pegram said we had a good foundation for a rubbish heap, but nothing more. They brought string and screws and nails, also the glass marbles from a certain make of ginger-beer bottle, and knives fearfully out of order, and corkscrews, and padlocks without keys, and a few threadbare story books, and three copies of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, and two old horseshoes, and catapults and bullets and shot and charms. They also brought three steel watch-chains and one leather one; and Percy Minimus offered a watch-chain made from his mother's hair, so he said; but nobody bid for it, naturally, for who on earth wants a watch-chain made out of somebody else's mother's hair? There was also a bottle imp, fourteen indiarubber balls and seven golf balls--all worn out--two kids' cricket bats unspliced, three pairs of tan gloves--new but small--and one pair of wool ones, eight neckties, not new, and a silk handkerchief, given to Tudor in case he had a cold in his head, but not required up till now, and therefore new. Among other items was half a packet of Sanatogen, also from Tudor, a box of chocolate cigarettes, several conjuring tricks, mostly out of order, and three guinea-pigs alive. Of other live things were included a white rat, with pink eyes and a hairless, pinkish tail, and a dormouse, which Mathers said was hibernating, though Mitchell thought was dead. It proved alive, on applying warmth, and fetched fivepence. Lastly, there was a chrysalis, into which a remarkable caterpillar, found by Hastings on the twenty-first of last September, had turned; and as nobody knew the species of moth to be presently produced by it, Hastings thought it worth money, and put a reserve of two-pence on it. But the chrysalis was long overdue, and so it did not reach the reserve; and so Hastings, who was still hopeful, bought it back for that sum. As a matter of fact, it never turned into anything, and was found to be quite hollow when examined.

There was a good deal of other trash hardly worth mentioning, and many lots at the sale did not produce any offer at all, let alone competition; and the owners of these lots thankfully got them back again, though, of course, sorry that they commanded no market value. And some kids were much surprised to find their rubbish had no value at all in the eyes of the larger world, so to speak.

One way and another, the sale realized eight shillings and fourpence, chiefly owing to the generosity of Rice, who gave the absurd sum of two shillings for the guinea-pigs, which were not even the chrysanthemum variety of pig, with wild and tousled hair, but just sleek, ordinary pigs, and known to be far past their

prime. One, in fact, had a bald head.

The Hutchings Testimonial now stood at four pounds fourteen shillings and sevenpence; and thanks to a windfall in the shape of five shillings from Cornwallis, who had a birthday and got a pound for it, we were now practically up to a fiver. In fact, I myself flung in the fivepence. But we were far from satisfied, for, as Mitchell with his mathematical mind pointed out, five pounds spread over one hundred and thirty-two boys amounts to the rather contemptible smallness of ninepence and one-eleventh a boy. We raised the question of inviting the masters to come in, from Dr. Dunston downwards, and some fondly thought that Dunston would very likely give another five pounds to double ours; but Barrington said he had reason to fear this would not happen, because, from rumours dropped between Brown and Fortescue, which he had accidentally overheard while working in Fortescue's study, he believed that a good many parents were putting the moratorium in force on the Doctor; and Fortescue seemed to think that it was quite within human possibility that the Doctor might put the moratorium in force on him and Brown, with very grave results to their financial position. But Brown said the moratorium was over long ago, and could not be revived against them.

Then two things of considerable importance happened on the subject of the Hutchings Testimonial. Firstly, we heard that Hutchings might come to Merivale for a week or so before returning to his regiment; and, secondly, Mitchell made a very interesting offer concerning the five pounds now deposited with him. He said, very truly, that money breeds money in skilled hands, and that no financier worthy of the name ever lets his talent lie hid in a napkin, but far from it. He said to the committee:

"It's like this. We are now a fortnight from the holidays, and the holidays will be five weeks long. Five and two are seven, therefore it follows that for seven weeks this five pounds is doing nothing whatever. This would be untrue to the science of political economy and banking. Therefore I propose that I send the five pounds to my father and ask him to invest it in his business. My father, John Septimus Mitchell, Esquire, is a member of the Stock Exchange of London, and would, no doubt, very easily turn our five pounds into six, or even seven, in the course of seven weeks. This would greatly increase the power of the committee and the extent of the testimonial for Hutchings. And then, at the beginning of next term, we shall be able to buy and present the testimonial in person to Hutchings."

Well, knowing Mitchell, it was rather a delicate question in a way; but what he said was sound finance, as Barrington admitted, and Barrington himself felt thoroughly inclined to trust Mitchell. We went into a sort of private committee, after Mitchell had gone, and though I and Thwaites voted against, the majority was in favour of agreeing to the suggestion of Mitchell. Therefore it was done.

Then Mitchell sent the five pounds to his father, and gave us the cheering

news that his father had received it and agreed to invest it at interest; and Mitchell handed Barrington a document from his father to show all was being rightly managed on the Stock Exchange about it. And Barrington kept the document carefully, as it was legal, and had a penny stamp on it.

We next returned to the question of the testimonial itself, and still could not agree about it, though we were now able to argue on the basis of seven pounds instead of five. We had agreed about a sword, but unfortunately found, on inquiries, that a sword worthy to be called a presentation sword would cost about fifty pounds, and ought to have rubies and emeralds in the handle, which was, of course, out of the question. Many things were suggested, but none, somehow, met the case, and we fairly kicked ourselves to think that a committee like us were such a lot of fatheads. And, of course, dozens of the chaps asked us about it, and were rather surprised we couldn't think of the right thing. Proposals were showered in, but all to no purpose, and the end of the term actually arrived without anything being settled. It was then agreed that we should all think hard about the form of the testimonial during the holidays, and Barrington hoped that events at the Front might develop and help us to hit on a happy idea. And we all hoped so, too. As for Mitchell, he said that he thought very likely Hutchings would rather have the money than anything else; but that was, of course, what Mitchell himself would rather have had, though far below the mind of a patriotic man like Hutchings. And Thwaites said rather scornfully to Mitchell that no doubt he would rather have money than an heirloom to hand down to the future generations; and Mitchell said that he undoubtedly would, because money was out and away the best possible sort of heirloom, and everybody knew it at heart, even though they might pretend different.

Then the holidays took place, and the prizes were decidedly skimpy, which was a disappointment to those who got them and a comfort to those who didn't. Nothing of any consequence occurred to me during the holidays, and I had no idea for Hutchings worth mentioning; and when we all returned, we found the committee as a whole were in the same position as before. There were many suggestions made, certainly, but none that pleased the entire committee. Then a dreadful thing upset the situation, and for three days the darkness of returning to school was made darker still by a sensational rumour. Mitchell did not turn up on the appointed afternoon, and it was whispered that he wasn't coming back at all! Presently the whisper grew into a regular roar, so to speak, and Brown announced the tremendous news that Mitchell had left altogether, and might be going straight into his father's business of being a stockbroker on the Stock Exchange, London.

To add to this, Hutchings was now staying at Merivale with the Doctor for a few days before going back to the War, and he had already heard about the testimonial, and was undoubtedly in a great state of excitement about it. His

wounds had taken an unexpectedly long time to heal, but he was now quite ready for renewed activity at the Front, and was, in fact, going back on the following Friday with other healed, heroic men.

Our position had now become extremely grave, and we held a committee meeting instantly, and Thwaites and I were in the position of the late Lord Roberts when he clamoured for an army and couldn't get one, because we had strongly advised that Mitchell should not be allowed to send the money to his father; but the committee had outvoted us. I was dignified myself, and did not remind the committee of my views; but Thwaites did, and there was a good deal of bitterness in the remarks of the committee, till Barrington reminded us of the legal document which we had preserved with such care. He said that he was not in the least alarmed, and felt sure that, whatever Mitchell might be, the father of Mitchell was a man of honour, and would not risk his position on the Stock Exchange of London for a paltry seven pounds.

So we wrote to the address on the legal document, stating the case and saying politely, but firmly, that we expected the seven pounds by return of post. We added that we trusted Mitchell's father implicitly, and that as the matter was very urgent, owing to Mr. Hutchings being just off again to the Front, we hoped that he would be so good as to give it his personal attention the moment he received our letter. This we all signed, to show how many people were interested and that it was a serious affair.

For three very trying days we heard nothing, and the school was in a fair uproar, and the committee got itself very much disliked. Then, when we had decided to put the matter into the hands of Dr. Dunston, Mitchell himself wrote to me and sent a cheque signed by his father. But it was not for seven pounds, I regret to say. In fact, it was not even for six. His wretched father had merely sent us back our five pounds with sevenpence added! Mitchell explained that we had received four per cent. for our money, and that he was sorry nothing better could be done for the moment, owing to the Stock Exchange being very much upset by the War. And he asked us for a stamped receipt for the money, which we sent him in very satirical language, and said that no doubt his father had made the two pounds himself. And we promised faithfully that when we grew up and had dealings on the Stock Exchange of London, they wouldn't be with Mitchell and his father. Barrington, by the way, wouldn't sign this piece of satire, which was invented by Tracey. All the same, we sent it, but Mitchell never answered it, and soon afterwards he turned up again, having merely been ill and not going to leave at all. Hutchings was going on the following Friday and something had to be done at once. The committee, which was now fairly sick of the sight of one another, met again--for the last time, I'm glad to say--and the question being acute, as Thwaites said, we proposed and seconded that a master, or two, should be invited to help

us with ideas. Then I thought of something still better, and suggested that we should simply and straightforwardly go to Hutchings himself and ask him what he most wanted in the nature of an heirloom that could be got for five pounds and sevenpence; and everybody gladly seconded this idea, though, of course, it was not so impressive as making a presentation with a few dignified words and the whole school present, as we had meant to do.

However, we went to Hutchings, and he was much pleased, and said it was ripping of us all, and promised, the morning before he went, to try and get us a half-holiday as a memory of him. This was good, but still better was the great ease with which Hutchings decided what he wanted. He said:

"I'll tell you what I'll do. On my way through London to Dover I'll buy a pair of field-glasses, and I'll have inscribed somewhere on them--

'To LIEUTENANT T. HUTCHINGS,
FROM MERIVALE SCHOOL.'"

We agreed gladly to this, and so did everybody, and several chaps, who had suggested this very thing and been turned down, reminded us afterwards.

At any rate, Hutchings got them, and wrote to Barrington, from a direction he couldn't name, to say he'd got them, inscribed and all, and that they were splendid glasses, and that we might picture him often using them on the field, to mark the enemy's position or sweep the sky for aeroplanes; which was very agreeable to us to hear, and showed all our trouble was by no means in vain. And, in return, we wrote to Hutchings and told him we were very pleased to know about the glasses, and were glad to inform him that we had got the half-holiday, and that though it unfortunately poured without ceasing all the time, it was quite successful in every other way.

THE FIGHT

My name is Rice, and there was only one thing I hated about the War, and even that I had to stop hating, because of England. My first feeling was the War had come too soon, and that if it had only been four years later, I should have been there. But, saying this to Tracey, he pointed out that, from England's point of view, it was lucky the War had come when it did, because every year was making

the Germans stronger, while we went gaily down the hill reducing our Navy and our Army too. So it was a jolly good thing the Great War hadn't waited till I went into the Army. In fact, in four years, by all accounts, there mightn't have been any army to go into.

"No doubt you'd have been a host in yourself, Rice," said Tracey in his comical way, meaning a joke, which I easily saw; "but, all the same, as we had to fight Germany, the sooner we did it the better."

So I gave up hating the sad fact of not being there, though it was extra rough on me, because many people seemed to think it was going to be the last war on earth; and if that was so, my occupation was gone, and I might just as well not have been born, except for the simple and rather tame pleasure of being alive. But what's the good of that, if you're not going to do anything worth mentioning from the cradle to the grave, as the saying is?

As far as mere fighting went, I did all I could at Merivale, and, after seven regular fights, got to be cock of the Lower School. And in ordinary times I should have been cock of the whole school; but, curiously enough, there was one chap of very unusual fighting ability at Merivale when I was there, and he was rightly regarded as cock of the school in the science of fighting.

It happened, also, that he and I were tremendous chums--such chums as are seldom seen--for we had similar ideas on all subjects and never differed even on the subject of the boxing art. In fact we only differed because I was going into the Navy and Sutherland minor was going into the Law. He had no taste for soldiering, like his brother, Sutherland major; though great genius for boxing, in which he took after his father, and as his father was in the law and wanted him to go into it, he resolved to obey.

But to me the law seemed a feeble profession, and I often tried to dissuade him from it.

Sutherland minor was sixteen and a half and tall; I was fifteen, and three inches shorter. He had better biceps than me and a longer reach, and he said I had a better punch than him, but less science.

After my third fight, he always let me second him in his fights; but he only had two before this particularly interesting fight I am going to mention; and one was against Blades, which he won after six rounds by excellent science and far superior footwork to Blades; and the other was against a chap called Pengelly, who only came for one term and gave himself frightful airs because he was a Cornishman. But I shouldn't think Cornwall had much use for him.

One day Sutherland said that the Cornish might be very good at catching pilchards and digging up tin, but they didn't seem much good at enlisting in Kitchener's Army. And Pengelly said there was a reason for that, though he refused to tell us what the reason was. Then he got into a fearful bate, and, little knowing

the truth about Sutherland, challenged him to fight; which, of course Sutherland instantly agreed to. Pengelly was very big and strong, and if he had been able to hit Sutherland as often as he wanted to, the fight might have been interesting, but, having no science whatever, he was useless against Sutherland. By sheer strength he stuck to it for eight rounds, during which time he got a fair doing and Sutherland was hardly marked; but then, though by no means all in, Pengelly realized that he wasn't going to get a knuckle on Sutherland and so he gave up.

He wasn't a bad chap really, though rather foolish about Cornwall, and he even said to me deliberately that a Cornishman was as good as an Irishman, which showed, if anything, that he was weak in his head. And after his fight with Sutherland, we asked him again what the reason was that Cornwall was so slack at enlisting, and he said that the truth was that half of all Cornish chaps go into the Navy, which, owing to Cornwall being almost surrounded by sea, they prefer. But whether that's true, or only a piffling excuse, I don't know.

Anyway, when it came to counting up the most famous men Cornwall ever produced, he could only mention Sir Humphry Davy, who invented the safety-lamp for miners, which was undoubtedly all right in its way, and "Q," who wrote *Dead Man's Rock*, and was knighted for doing so; and nobody ever deserved it more. But that was all, whereas, when it came to Ireland, of course, I could count up thousands of the greatest heroes in creation, including Mr. Redmond, who has just got Home Rule for us after fearful obstacles.

But I never fought Pengelly; there wasn't time. For he only had one term at Merivale, and then, I believe, went to Canada suddenly, to an uncle there.

After that began the curious affair between me and Sutherland. But as it was remarkable in every way and will never be forgotten by our families, I may mention them.

In the first place, Sutherland's mother was a chronical invalid. I said it must be very difficult to love a person who lived in bed and could never be any use out of doors, or ride to hounds, or anything; and he said that it made no difference and that he was accustomed to it, because his mother had always been an utter crock ever since he knew her, and even at her best, when she was feeling unusually fit, she only changed her bed for a sofa in his father's study. Apparently she was just as keen about him as my mother was about me, and though she didn't much care to hear about his fights, she tried to understand the beauty of them like his father did. But naturally this father was more to Sutherland than the mother could be; because his father had been amateur middle-weight champion of England in his time, and held the cup for three years, and had been runner-up twice also. He was, therefore, a very great boxer and fighter, and Sutherland had been taught by his father, which accounted for his genius at it and his style, which was very finished. He would undoubtedly have been a "pro" if he had been in another walk of life;

but as it was, he fully intended to do as well as his father had done in the amateur boxing world, though, as he was growing very rapidly and was also a great eater, it looked as if he would end by being a heavy-weight, which his father never was; though, as Sutherland told me, his father had beaten a few good heavy-weights in his time, though he never touched twelve stone in his boxing days.

Sutherland major, by the way, had just left Merivale when the War broke out, and he instantly went into the O.T.C.'s and soon became a second lieutenant and went to France.

This father of Sutherland was a lawyer, and Sutherland regretted to say that the War had done him harm as, owing to it apparently, people were not going to law nearly so much as usual. Still he thought, after the War, he might find a great improvement. He was a lawyer of the sort called a barrister, and wore a wig and gown and pleaded for criminals before the judges and juries on the Western Circuit, often getting them off when it looked jolly bad for them--so Sutherland said.

But my father was quite different, being a gentleman at large, and funnily enough, owing to the War, he made the first money he had ever made in his life, for he had a great knowledge of horses, and the War Office, hearing of this, let him go out and choose and buy horses for it, which he willingly did, and for his trouble he got the enormous sum of a guinea a day!

My mother sent me a sovereign of my father's earnings and told me to keep it and bore a hole in it and put it on my watch-chain, and be proud of it; but this I did not do, because a sovereign is a sovereign, and I simply couldn't see a good sovereign wasting its time, so to speak, on my watch-chain.

Then one day, walking as usual with Sutherland on the way to a footer match in which we were both playing, both being in the first "soccer" team, him at right back and me at right half, we got talking about a fight I rather hoped to have with Briggs. And Sutherland was trying to think of a *casus belli* which, in English, means a reason for the fight. But, knowing Briggs, he said no *casus belli* would ever arise; and I said in that case, if Briggs were willing, we might fight for a purse, if anybody would subscribe one.

And then Sutherland reminded me that I should become a "pro," and Briggs also, if that were done.

He said:

"Briggs wouldn't fight just for the sake of fighting, and as you and he are very good friends, and there's no 'needle' in it, it looks difficult."

Then we talked, and then he happened to say--about fighting in general and weights and so on:

"You might just as well think of licking him"--speaking of Hutchings, who had gone to the Front--"as you might of licking me."

"Of course," I said; "it would be absurd."

That was the whole conversation, and I forgot it while the match was on, and, in fact, it didn't come back to me till I went to bed that night; and then it fairly kept me awake, and I was fearfully sorry I'd said it would be absurd for me to think of licking Sutherland. In fact I got sorrier and sorrier, and then I wondered why the dickens Sutherland thought it was such a mad idea my licking him; and before I went to sleep I felt, in a way, rather sick with Sutherland for having such a poor opinion of me.

In the morning the feeling was still there, and he noticed I was a bit off and asked me if I was all right, and I said I was.

But it weighed fearfully, and I fairly got to hate myself in about two days for having said the idea of my licking Sutherland was absurd. In fact, the more I thought about it, the less absurd it seemed. I knew he was heavier and had a longer reach and was older and more scientific; but he himself had said that I had a fine punch; and if you've got that, you never know what may happen; and many an unlikely thing has come off in the ring owing to unexpected smacks landing at the right moment in the right place.

After a good deal of hard thinking and going down about four in my form, which landed me at the bottom, I felt I must speak to Sutherland, or I should burst.

So when he asked me, for the thousandth time, what was the matter and if anybody had scored off me, or anything, I said:

"Look here, Sutherland, you remember that while going to the footer match last week, you said I might just as well think of licking you as of licking Hutchings?"

And he said:

"Yes, I remember."

And I said:

"I told you it was absurd, didn't I?"

"You did--naturally," answered Sutherland.

"Well," I said, "I was wrong--it wasn't in the least natural for me to say that, and there's nothing absurd about it. It's been on my mind ever since. And now I see it wasn't absurd."

"What wasn't absurd?" asked Sutherland. "The idea of your licking Hutchings, or the idea of your licking me?"

"The idea of my licking you," I said firmly.

For a moment Sutherland was quite silent.

"D'you really think so?" he asked.

"Yes," I said. "After considering it quietly--in bed and in chapel and at many other times--I can't see anything absurd about it."

"In fact, Rice, you think you might have a chance against me?" suggested

Sutherland.

"I don't say that it would be much of a chance," I told him. "Probably you'd do me, because you're a lot cleverer and more scientific; but when I said 'absurd,' I went too far."

Sutherland considered.

"You're quite right," he admitted. "You might get over a lucky one. It's very unlikely, but you might. Therefore there would be nothing absurd about our fighting, and I oughtn't to have suggested there was. Somehow I never regarded us as in the same street. But, of course, we may be."

"We're not," I said. "As for boxing on points we're not. But fighting is different and--there you are."

He nodded.

"If you feel like that," he said, "of course----"

"I never did feel like that; in fact I never thought of it before," I told Sutherland; "but now----"

He didn't say anything, so I went on:

"It's a matter of honour in a way," I said.

"From your point of view it is, no doubt," he answered.

"Isn't it from yours?" I asked him.

"Not exactly," he explained. "We're very good friends--in fact more than just common or garden friends--and I never thought of fighting you, regarding you as cock of the Lower School and not supposing the question would ever arise between us, as I shall probably leave Merivale before you get into the Upper School--if ever you do. Still, as you feel your honour makes you want to fight me, you must, of course."

"There's no *casus belli* otherwise," I said, and Sutherland answered that honour was the best *casus belli* possible. He said:

"Of course, if you honestly feel that I have wounded your honour, Rice, we must fight."

And I said:

"You haven't wounded it exactly. In fact I don't know what the dickens you have done. But you've done something, and though you're my chum and I hope you always will be for evermore, yet I don't believe I shall get over this feeling, or, in fact, be any more good in the world till we've fought."

"As a matter of fact," said Sutherland, "you've wounded your honour yourself, by thoughtlessly agreeing to my suggestion that you couldn't lick me. Still, whatever has done it, the result is the same, I'm afraid."

"I'm afraid it is," I said.

I suppose no two chaps ever arranged a thing of this sort in a more regretful frame of mind, for we had always been peculiarly friendly, and the idea of ever

fighting had never occurred to us; but it was just that fatal remark of Sutherland, showing his point of view, and showing me, with only too dreadful clearness, his opinion of me as compared with him. And the queerest thing of all was that I quite agreed with him really, only there was a feeling in me I couldn't possibly let it go at that; and, of course, there was also a secret hope that, after all, Sutherland and I might both be mistaken about his being such a mighty lot better than I was.

So we agreed to fight on the following Saturday afternoon, as there was only a second eleven match on our own ground, and we should have leisure to go into the wood close by, where these affairs were settled.

Needless to say, the world at large was fearfully surprised when it heard we were going to fight. We still pottered about together in our usual friendly way, and when we were asked, as of course we were, what we were fighting for, it was more than I could do to explain, or Sutherland either. Travers major understood the truth of the situation, and I think Thwaites did, and possibly Preston; but to have tried to explain to anybody else the frightfully peculiar situation would have been impossible, for they hadn't the minds to understand it. So we just said in a general sort of way, we were still chums, but felt such a tremendous interest in the question of which was the greatest fighter, that we were going to find out in the most friendly spirit possible.

Of course, being easily the two best in the school, the sensation was huge, but the general opinion seemed to be that I must be mad to think of beating Sutherland, and I never argued much about it, and said very likely I was, but that I hated uncertainty in a thing like that.

Pegram said:

"It will be your Sedan, Rice," meaning that I should be treated by Sutherland like the French were treated by the Germans on that occasion.

But I did not think so. I said:

"Most likely I shall be licked and badly licked, which is nothing against such a man as Sutherland; but it won't be my Sedan by long chalks, because we've agreed whichever wins it will make no difference."

"Certainly there will be no indemnity," said Pegram, "as you're both far too hard up for any such thing; but you needn't think the beaten one will ever feel the same again to the winner; because human nature is all against it."

"Your human nature may be," I said to Pegram, who was a foxy chap, great at strategy, but otherwise mean. "Your human nature may be like that, but mine and Sutherland's is not."

All the same, I had Pegram to second me, because he is full of cunning, and I also had Travers minor; and Sutherland had Abbott, who is a very fine second, and would be a fine boxer, too, but for a short leg on one side.

Williams was his other second, and Travers major consented to be referee.

Fighting was not allowed at Merivale, but Travers, though head of the school, and never known to break any other rule, supported fair fighting, because he believed it was good; and he also believed that the Doctor did not really much dislike it, though no doubt to parents he had to say he did. Brown, however, hated fighting, and as he was master in charge on the appointed day, we had to exercise precautions and keep the fight as quiet as possible.

Though favourable to fighting as a rule, Travers never cared much about my fight with Sutherland and even tried to make us change our minds. But he had no reasons that we thought good enough, or rather, that I thought good enough; because of course I was the challenger and Sutherland had no choice but to agree.

It turned out that Sutherland was rather glad of the fight, because it distracted his mind from sadness. A fortnight before, he had been home from Saturday till Monday, to see his mother, who was worse, because his brother Tom, or Sutherland major, was in the trenches; and his father had been very gloomy about it, so the fight served to cheer him up, and brighten his spirits, which was one good thing it did.

Then the eventful day arrived, and the fortunate chaps who knew that this was the appointed time, looked at me with awe; and as we were getting up in our dormitory, Percy Minimus whispered to me:

"You'll look a very different spectacle to-night from what you do now, Rice."

The morning seemed long and I jolly near messed up the whole thing and had a squeak of being kept in for the half-holiday, but I escaped, and at last the time came when the footer match was in full swing and Brown, with a lot of kids, watching it.

Then, one by one, about fifteen of us strolled off, including Sutherland and me and our seconds and Travers major and Preston and Blades and Saunders and Perkinson and Ash, and Percy Minimus, who liked the sight of blood, if it wasn't his own.

No time was lost, and a ring was made with a bit of rope while Sutherland and I prepared. They were two minute rounds, and Ash kept the time.

No two chaps ever shook hands in a more friendly spirit, and as to the fight itself, as I cannot relate it, I may copy the notes that Blades took. He missed a good many delicate things that we did, but the general description, though not at all in regular sporting language, gives a fair idea of how it went. He wrote these words:

Round 1.--Sutherland seemed thoughtful and not so much interested as Rice. Rice advanced and dodged about and struck out into the air several times and danced on his feet; and once he would have hit Sutherland; but Sutherland ducked his head under the blow, and before Rice could recover, hit him with both fists on the body. Rice laughed and Sutherland smiled. They were dancing about doing

nothing when Ash called time, and they rested, and their seconds wiped their faces and Rice blew his nose with his fingers.

Round 2.--Now Sutherland began to hit Rice a good deal oftener than Rice hit him. But, in the middle of the round, Rice got in a very fine blow on Sutherland's face and knocked him down. Sutherland instantly rose bleeding, but by no means troubled. He praised Rice and said it was a beauty. And Rice said, "Don't patronize me, Sutherland," but Sutherland did not answer. For the rest of the round Sutherland hit Rice several times, but didn't make him bleed. It was a good round and both were panting at the end.

Round 3.--Sutherland wouldn't let Rice get near enough to hit him and kept catching Rice's attempts on his arms. And his arms being longer than Rice's, he could land on Rice without being hit back. He did not hit so hard as Rice, but he hit Rice, whereas Rice hit the air. Still Rice got in a very good one just in the middle of Sutherland's body, which doubled up Sutherland, and before he could undouble again, Rice had hit him very hard on the face with an upper cut. Sutherland fairly poured with blood, but was quite cool and showed no signs of not liking it. He got in a very good blow with his left on Rice's neck before Ash called time.

Round 4.--It was certainly a very fine fight of much higher class than we had ever seen before at Merivale. This round was the fiercest up to now, and Travers major had to caution Rice for being inclined to use his head. Still he fought very finely, but it worried him fearfully to be hit so often without getting one back. The hits were not heavy hits to the spectator, but they must have been harder than they looked, because Rice, who has black hair and a very pale skin by nature, was now getting a mottled sort of skin. In this round they were rather slower than before, and stood and panted a good deal, and while they panted, they looked at one another with a sort of doleful cheerfulness from time to time. But there was also fierce fighting, and Sutherland at last drew blood from Rice with a blow on the nose. At the sight of his blood, Rice gave a great display and kept Sutherland moving about, and at last hit him backwards out of the ring. But Sutherland instantly returned and went on fighting till the end of the round. It was a splendid round in every way.

Round 5.---Both were now rather tired, and in this round they took it easy.

But at taking it easy Sutherland was much better than Rice and did not waste so much energy in feinting. He had the best of this round and hit Rice twice or three times on the face. At the end he fairly knocked Rice down, and when Ash said "Time," Pegram and Travers minor rushed to pick up Rice and carry him to his corner; but he rose and walked.

Round 6.--This looked as though it was going to be the last, for Sutherland was now fresher than Rice and evidently stronger. Rice began the round well, but soon fell away, and Sutherland hit him several times, and once over the right

eyebrow and cut him, and evidently did that eye no good. Rice made ferocious dashes and Sutherland got away from them; and then, while Rice was resting, Sutherland dashed in and Rice didn't get away. Sutherland hit Rice on the chest and knocked him down, and it looked as though he wasn't going to get up again; but he did, and still had good strength. He was being licked, but slowly. At the end of the round he got one good one in, though it was lucky.

I must here break off the account of the fight by Blades to describe a most amazing thing which made this fight far unlike any other that I or Sutherland had ever fought. After the sixth round we were being mopped up and Pegram was advising me to chuck it, and I was saying, in a gasping sort of way, I should try to stick a few more rounds and hope for a bit of luck, when, to our great horror, there suddenly appeared from the trees Brown and a man clad in black. At first we thought it was a policeman, and that Brown had heard of the fight and had called a constable to take us up; but it turned out that Brown hadn't heard of the fight, and the man in black was none other than the father of Sutherland, the famous middle-weight of other days!

He had called to see Sutherland, and had been sent to the playing field; and there he had been met by Brown. And Brown, guessing that the big chaps were in the wood, had brought Sutherland's father actually to the ring side!

Brown, of course, was furious and wanted to stop the fight and take down all our names; but the famous middle-weight would not hear of this. The moment he found that Sutherland was fighting, a wave of animation went over him and he begged Brown as a personal favour to let us finish. He even promised to put it all right with the Doctor if anything was said, which showed his fighting qualities were still there. Brown, of course, curled up; but his little eyes blazed, and he said that Sutherland's father must take the responsibility, which he gladly undertook to do. Then Brown, giving us a look which told without words what would happen when Sutherland's father was gone, went back to the kids.

In the meantime, I and Sutherland had a fine rest, and after that we went on again. I wished much that his father had seen the whole fight, because I knew now, only too well, that Sutherland had got me and that, of course, with his father there, he'd buck up and do something out of the common; and I deeply wished my father were there, and not far away buying horses at a guinea a day in Ireland. But I hoped now, with this good rest, to last at least two more rounds.

I may now go on with the description of Blades.

Round 7.--Much refreshed by about six minutes' rest, Rice and Sutherland began again, and Sutherland's father watched the fight with a calm and sporting interest. He was a clean-shaved man of large size about the shoulders; but he had a pale, sad-looking face and very thin lips, and one ear larger than the other. Sutherland had to withstand a wild rush from Rice and hit Rice while he backed

away from him, which pleased his father. But Rice was not stopped, and he got close to Sutherland and hit him very hard on the body until they fell into each other's arms. And Sutherland's father said, "Break! Break!" and then apologized to Travers major, who was referee. They parted, and Rice, evidently much refreshed, went after Sutherland and hit him about three or four times; then Sutherland hit him once. Then it was time.

Round 8.--Sutherland's father certainly seemed to have brought Sutherland bad luck, for in the next round Rice held his own, and though knocked down at the beginning of the round, got up and went on. And Sutherland's father asked me how many rounds had been fought, and was very much interested in my notes. And, owing to him reading them, I could not describe this round. At the end both were tired, one not more than the other.

Round 9.--Rice, feeling he had still a chance, fought as well as ever in this round, and Sutherland was clearly not taking anything like his old interest in the fight. He kept looking mournfully at his father and didn't seem to care where Rice hit him, and I could see that his father was a good deal disappointed. Rice had much the best of this round, and Sutherland bled again, though Rice did also.

Round 10.--It began all right, though both could hardly keep up their arms, and then, without a blow, suddenly Sutherland shook his head and extended his hand to Rice, and Rice shook it and the battle was over.

That was the end of what Blades wrote, but much remains to be told, and the fight, which was extraordinary in the beginning, turned out far more extraordinary at the end. I couldn't believe my senses when Sutherland gave in, and more could his father, and then came out the truth, which was sad in a way, but really much sadder for me than Sutherland. Because what I had thought was a right down glorious victory, well worth the pint of blood I had shed and the tooth I had lost, turned out to be what you might really call very little better than winning on a foul.

After the fight, Sutherland hastened to his father and asked him about Sutherland major and heard he was all right and going strong. Then he actually began to blub; and his father rotted him and asked him what the dickens was the matter with him, and how he had given in to a chap sizes smaller than himself, and then Sutherland, between moments of undoubted weeping explained.

He said:

"I never saw you in black clothes before, because at home you always wear tweeds with squares and a red tie; and seeing you in pitch black, of course I thought Tom was dead. Till then I was winning, and Rice knows I was; but after you came and I felt positive Tom was dead----"

Then Sutherland was quite unable to go on, and his father asked him however he thought he could have stood there grinning at a kid fight under such sad

circumstances. Then he led Sutherland away and explained that he happened to have been attending a funeral, near Plymouth, of some old lawyer friend; and he thought he would kill two birds with one stone, as they say, and come over and have a look at Sutherland and tell him they'd heard good news of his brother and that his mother had bucked up again.

Well, there it was, and much worse for me than Sutherland, because his grief was turned into joy; but my joy was turned into grief--winning in that footling way, which didn't amount to winning at all. In fact it was mere dust, and enough to make me weep myself, only that was a thing I had never been known to do, and never shall in this world, or the next.

However, Sutherland minor was jolly sporting about it, and thoroughly understood how it must look from my point of view. He even offered to come to Ireland in the Christmas Holidays, if my people would ask him, and fight me again on my own ground. He couldn't say more, but though I gladly accepted the idea of his coming to Ireland, which was a very happy thought on his part, I told him frankly that I should not fight him again at present.

"We may meet some happy day in the Amateur Championships, Sutherland," I said, "if I get large enough and you don't get too large."

"No, Rice," he answered; "for I shall be a heavyweight when I'm twenty, and you at best can never hope to be anything but a welter; but I hope we'll second each other many a time and oft."

PERCY MINIMUS AND HIS TOMMY

There were three Percys at Merivale, and they were all there together; and to masters they were, of course, known as Percy major, Percy minor, and Percy minimus, but we called them "the Three Maniacs."

Though mad, they were nice chaps in a way, and did unexpected things and always interested everybody because of their surprises. They were all very different but very original, owing to their father being a well-known actor. And Percy major was already an actor by nature, and could imitate anything with remarkable exactness, from Dr. Dunston to a monkey on a barrel organ. He could even imitate a hen with chickens, but he was going for much higher flights when he went on the stage, and knew the parts of Hamlet and Macbeth and Richard III by heart; though he said to Travers, and I heard him, that it would probably

be many a long day before he got a chance to act these great tragical characters before a London audience. His father, on the contrary, was a comedian, and Blades had once seen him in a pantomime and liked him, and said that he was good.

Percy minor was not going on the stage, though when he liked he could be awfully funny. Only he was generally serious, and meant to be a painter. His great hope was to take likenesses, and he was always practising it, and his school books were full of portraits of chaps and masters. Some you could recognize.

As for Percy minimus, he was the maddest of the lot, and my special friend. We were in the Lower Third; and Forbes minimus was also our special friend. But he chucked Merivale, as his parents went to the Cape of Good Hope and took him, and then Percy and I were left.

Percy never came out much while his brothers were at Merivale, and his only strong point was singing in the choir. At music he was an undoubted dab, and he liked it, and he said that, if his voice turned into anything worth mentioning after it cracked, he should very likely be an opera singer of the first water. And if it failed and fizzled away to nothing after cracking, as treble voices sometimes do, then he was going to be a clergyman--if his father would let him.

He certainly sang like the devil, and Mr. Prowse, our music-master, was fearfully keen on him, and arranged solos in chapel for him. And people came from long distances on Sundays to hear him sing, though old Dunston always thought, when outsiders turned up to the chapel services, it was to hear him preach. But far from it.

Well, this Percy minimus was what you may call sentimental, and he certainly was a bit of a girl in some ways. I hated that squashy side of him, and tried to cure it; but I forgave him, because he liked me, and not many chaps did, owing to my having a stammer.

Percy minimus was frightfully interested in my stammer, and said it would very likely be cured when I grew up. He said that people who stammer when they talk can often sing quite well; so I tried and found it was so. But here, again, there was a drawback, because my singing voice, though quite without any stammer, was right bang off as a voice, and even funnier than my stammer.

Percy minimus said it was just the sound a fly made before it died, when it was caught by a spider; so naturally I chucked it.

But this about Percy, not me. He had very kind instincts, and was of a gentle disposition. For instance, when three of the masters went to the war, and Dr. Dunston said he was going to fill the breach and do extra work and take our class; while we much regretted it, Percy minimus thought it was fine of the Doctor.

He said:

"Though it is bad hearing for us, Cornwallis, we are bound to admit it is sporting of him. Because, at his great age, it must be very tiring to do a lot of

extra work; and no doubt to take the Lower Third must be fairly deadly for such a learned man as him."

"It will be deadlier for us," I said; and, of course, it was. But that shows the queer views that Percy gets--hardly natural, I call it. And then, when the Doctor threw up the sponge and got a new master called Peacock to help and fill the gap till after the War, when Hutchings and Meadows would come back, if alive, Percy minimus was queer again.

This Peacock was old and dreadfully humble. I don't think he'd ever been a master before, and he was very unlike his name in every way, and had no idea of keeping order, but went in for getting our affection. He tried frantically to be friendly; but he failed, because he was too wormlike, being a crushed and shabby man with a thin, grey beard. And when he attempted to fling himself into a game of hockey and be young and dashing, he hurt himself and had to go in and get brandy.

I believe he was a sort of charity on old Dunston's part, really, for Mr. Peacock told Pegram that he had a wife and six children, and his eldest son was at the War, and his second son was in the General Post Office, and his eldest daughter was a schoolmistress at Bedford.

Fancy telling Pegram these things! All Pegram did afterwards was to make fun of Peacock and treat him with scorn, and many did the same; but Percy minimus encouraged him, and he liked Percy minimus, and told him several things about the General Post Office not generally known.

Peacock, finding that me and Percy minimus were rather above the common herd, told us that he was very anxious about his son at the War, and was very interested about the War in general, and made us interested in it, too. He read us a letter from his son at the Front, and Percy minimus said it brought home the horrors--especially in the matters of food.

Though not a great eater, Percy liked nice food better than any other kind, and then, owing to this great feeling for nice food, there happened the curious, and in fact most extraordinary, adventure of his life.

He came to me much excited one day with a newspaper. It was a week old, but otherwise perfect in every way, and it had started a scheme for sending the men at the Front a jolly good Christmas gift. For the sum of five shillings the newspaper promised to send off tobacco and cigarettes and sweets and chocolate and a new wooden pipe, all in one parcel; and so, as Percy minimus pointed out, if you could only rake up that amount and send it to the paper, it meant that one man in the trenches on Christmas Day would have the great joy of receiving all these luxuries in one simultaneous parcel from an unknown friend at home.

I said:

"It's a splendid idea, and I should like nothing better; but, of course, in our

case, it is out of the question. We've both subscribed to the Hutchings' testimonial, and there's not a penny in sight for me this side of Christmas, and no more there is for you."

He admitted this, but said, because there wasn't a penny in sight, it didn't follow we might not, by some unheard-of deeds, rake up the money in time. And I said, well knowing what five shillings meant, that the deeds would certainly have to be unheard-of. I said:

"There's a fortnight before you have to send in the money, but, so far as I am concerned, it might just as well be ten years."

And he said:

"The problem simply is: How to raise five shillings out of nothing in fourteen days."

And I said:

"Yes."

And he said:

"It sounds simple enough."

And I said:

"The hardest problems often do."

In two days he had got a shilling, by selling a thing he greatly valued. It was a tie his mother had given him, and it was made of sheeny silk, and changed colour according to which way you looked at it. His mother had given half a crown for it, and Percy wore it on Sundays only.

It was Sutherland who gave the money; and that still left four shillings, and Percy minimus hadn't got another thing in the world worth twopence. He then tried writing home, and failed. He said his father was out of work, and, though a very generous and kind father as a rule, not just now. His mother also failed him. She wrote sorrowfully, but said that she and his father had done everything about the War they could for the present. He then wrote to his godmother, and got a shilling. Encouraged by this, he wrote to his godfather, who didn't answer the letter.

Fourpence had gone on stamps for these four letters, and he was accordingly left with one and eightpence. Subtracting this from five shillings, you will find he still had to raise three shillings and fourpence.

It looked hopeless, and I pointed out there was the additional danger that he might be accused of getting money under false pretences if he didn't collect the lot; but he did not fear that, because, as he said, whatever he might get, he could send to some other charity which was open to take less than five shillings.

There were now seven days left, and he began to get very fidgetty and wretched. He said he was always seeing in his mind's eye a Tommy in the trenches waiting and watching and hoping, between his fights, that Percy minimus would

send him one of those grand simultaneous packets. It got on his nerves after a bit, and twice he woke me in the dead of the night in our dormitory sniffing very loud.

I said:

"You're making a toil of a pleasure, Percy."

And he said:

"No, I'm not. Whenever I go to sleep, I dream of my Tommy in the trenches; and the parcels are being given out by Lord French, and my Tommy stretches up his hand eagerly and hopefully; but there's no parcel for him. And he shrugs his shoulders and just bears it, and goes back to his gun; but it's simply hell for me."

"What's he like?" I asked, to get Percy minimus off the sad side of it.

"Huge and filthy," said Percy minimus. "He has a brown face and a big, black moustache and one of the new steel hats; and he's plastered with mud, and his eyes roll with craving for cigarettes and chocolates."

"You needn't worry," I said. "He'll get his parcel all right. Of course, they won't miss him."

"What a fool you are, Cornwallis!" he answered, still sniffing. "Can't you see that, if I don't send a parcel, there will be one parcel less; and so one man will go without who would otherwise have had a parcel; and that man will be this one I see in my dreadful dreams."

"If you put it like that," I said--"of course."

Then he had another beastly thought.

"I've got an idea the man is Peacock's son," he said. "And I feel a regular traitor to Peacock now every time I look at him."

"Then why don't you ask him for some money?" I naturally answered.

"I feel he hasn't got any," replied Percy. "But I can try."

"Besides," I said, "his son may be an officer, and, of course, they would be far above parcels."

"I hope he is," said Percy; "but I don't think he is. And nobody would be above a parcel at a time like that."

Anyway he asked Peacock, and Peacock gave him sixpence, and wished he could do better. This made two and twopence; and the same day Percy found a threepenny piece in the playground; and though, at another time, he would have mentioned this, with a view of returning it to the proper owner, now he didn't, but said it was a Providence, and added it to the rest.

And this gave him another hopeful idea, and he mentioned the parcel for his Tommy in his prayers, morning and evening, and asked me to do so too. I was fed up with the whole thing by now, because Percy was getting fairly tormented by it, and even said he saw the Tommy looking at him in broad daylight sometimes--over the playground wall, or through the window in the middle of a class. Still

I obliged him, and prayed four times for him to get his two and sevenpence; but there was no reply whatever; and in this way two days were wasted.

Then he had a desperate but brilliant idea, and told me. He said:

"After school on Friday, in the half-hour before tea, I'm going to break bounds and go down into Merivale and stand by the pavement and sing the solo from the anthem we did last Sunday! Many people who sing along by the pavement make money by doing so, and I might."

"If you're caught, Dunston will flog you," I reminded him.

But he was far past a thing like that. His eyes had glittered in rather a wild way for three days now, and he said the Tommy with the black moustache was always looking reproachfully at him, and if he shut his eyes he saw him more distinctly than ever. In fact, he was getting larger and more threatening every minute. He said:

"A mere flogging is nothing to what they endure in the trenches."

It was a sporting idea, and I would have risked it and gone with him; in fact, I offered, being his great chum, but he would not allow me.

"No," he said, "nothing is gained by your coming. This is entirely my affair. Besides, you wouldn't tempt people to subscribe."

So he went, and escaped in the darkness, and I waited at the limit of "bounds" with great anxiety to meet him when he came back. My last word to him was not to sing his bit out of an anthem, but something comic about the War. But he didn't know anything comic about the War, and he said, even if he did, that such a thing would only amuse common people, who could not be supposed to give more than halfpence, if they gave anything at all; whereas a solo from a fine anthem would attract a better class, who understood more about music, and were more religious, and consequently had more money.

So he went, and in about twenty minutes, to my great horror, I saw him being brought back in the custody of Brown--our well known master!

The hateful Brown always loves to score off anybody not in his own class, and so, seeing Percy warbling out of bounds in the middle of Merivale, and about ten people, mostly kids, listening to him, he pounced on the wretched Percy and dragged him away. He'd been singing about ten minutes when the blow fell, and he was fearfully upset about it, because everything had been going jolly well, and he had already made no less than sevenpence in coppers, all from oldish women. He had been told to go away from in front of a butcher's shop, but nobody else had interfered with him in the least, and he had sung the anthem solo through twice, and was just off again when the brutal Brown came along and saw the Merivale colours on his cap, recognized Percy minimus, and very nearly had a fit.

So there it was; and he got flogged, and Dr. Dunston said it showed low tastes, and would have been a source of great sorrow to his father. And he also

said that to explode a sacred air in that way in hope of touching the charitable to fill his own pocket was about the limit, and a great disgrace to the school in general. All of which went off Percy like water off a duck's back, and the flogging didn't seem to hurt him either.

And there were four days still, and he said his Tommy grew larger and larger, until he was almost as big as a house. In fact, Percy minimus was rapidly growing dotty, and, as his great friend, I felt I must do something, or he would very likely get some other dangerous illness, or have a fit, or lose his mind for ever and become a maniac in real earnest. So I told Percy minor; but unfortunately he and my Percy had quarrelled rather bitterly for the moment, and Percy minor said he didn't care what happened to Percy minimus; and that if he went out of his mind he wouldn't have far to go; while, as to Percy major, I couldn't tell him, because he had left Merivale the term before.

The matron now discovered that Percy was queer, for she'd been making him take pills for two days, and then one night, hearing him sigh fearfully after he was in bed, she tried his temperature, and found it about three hundred degrees of warmth. So she lugged him off to the sick room, and Dr. Weston came in his motor, and said he couldn't see any reason for it, and gave Percy some muck to calm him down.

Next day he was kept in the sick room, though cooler, and when Dr. Weston came on that day and questioned Percy in a kind tone of voice, he explained the whole thing to the doctor, and said that he was in fearful difficulties of mind. And Dr. Weston asked him what difficulties, and he said for two shillings, which, added to three, make five.

Then the doctor told him to go on, so he did, and showed the doctor the advertisement from the paper about the simultaneous parcels. He also said that his Tommy had now grown as big as a cloud in the sky, and was always looking at him by night and day hungrily, and urging him on to fresh efforts. And he also said that if he was only allowed to go into the streets and sing an anthem for an hour or two, the two shillings would be accomplished, and all would be well. And encouraged by the great interest of Dr. Weston, Percy minimus ventured to ask him if he thought he could ask Dr. Dunston to allow this to be done, seeing it meant great comfort and joy for a Tommy in the trenches on Christmas Day.

It made Percy much cooler and calmer explaining why his temperature had run up, and the doctor said it was undoubtedly not good for Percy to have the Tommy so much on his mind. He didn't approve of the idea of Percy singing either; but he put his hand into his waistcoat pocket and produced a two-shilling piece, as if it was nothing, and he said that if the matron or somebody, would get a postal order for five shillings and send it off at once, he had every reason to think that Percy would soon recover.

Which was done, and I was allowed to see Percy, and bring from his desk the cutting out of the newspaper, which he had already signed with his name and address, which were to go to the Front with his parcel. And Percy said that a great weight had now been lifted from his brain, which no doubt it had.

Anyhow, when Dr. Weston came next day he found Percy in a bath of perspiration, and was much pleased, and said he was practically cured. And Percy told him that his Tommy had now shrunk to about the size of an ordinary Tommy, and only came when he was asleep, and was not in the least reproachful, but quite pleasant and nice. And one day later the Tommy disappeared altogether, and Percy minimus became perfectly well. In fact, before the holidays arrived he seemed to have forgotten all about his Tommy, and I took jolly good care not to remind him.

He got fearfully keen about Dr. Weston then, and said that he was the best man he had ever seen or heard of; and he even hoped that next term he might run up to three hundred degrees again--just for the great pleasure of seeing and talking to this doctor once more.

But that wasn't all by any means--in fact, you might say that far the most remarkable part of the adventure of Percy minimus had yet to come. He went home for the holidays, and when he came back, much to my astonishment, he was full of his blessed Tommy again. He actually said that he'd got a photograph of him!

I thought that coming back to school had made him queer once more, but he wasn't in the least queer, for I saw the photograph with my own eyes.

It was like this: the Tommy who had got the Christmas parcel which Percy's five shillings bought, found Percy's address in it, according to the splendid arrangement of the newspaper, and, though far too busy in the trenches to take any notice of it just then, he was not too busy to smoke the new pipe and the cigarettes and eat the various sweets--no doubt between intervals of fiery slaughter. But he kept Percy's address in his pocket, for he was a good and grateful man; and then, most unfortunately, he was hit in the foot by a piece of shrapnel shell, and though far from killed, yet so much wounded that he had to retire from the Front. In fact, he was sent home to recover, and one day in hospital, about a week before the end of the holidays, he had found Percy minimus's name and address in the pocket of his coat, and had written Percy a most interesting letter of four pages, saying that the parcel had been a great comfort to him, and that he had sucked the last peppermint drop only an hour before being shrapnelled. And, having been photographed several times in the hospital by visitors, he sent Percy minimus one. And there he was!

I said it was a jolly interesting thing, and so on; but I couldn't for the moment see why Percy was so frightfully excited about it, because it was quite a possible

thing to happen, though, of course, very good in its way, and a letter he would always keep.

And he said:

"You don't seem to see the point, Cornwallis. It's a miracle."

And I said:

"Why?"

And he said:

"Because this is the very identical Tommy I was always seeing in my dreams--the very identical one!"

I hadn't thought of that, but somehow taken it for granted. Then he pointed out it wasn't in the least a thing to take for granted, but the purest miracle that ever happened in the memory of man, and quite beyond human power to explain it in the world.

I said there might be people in the world who could, but he wouldn't hear of such a thing. He said:

"No--not in this world; but no doubt there are in the next."

And I said:

"Then you'll have to wait."

And he said:

"It's done one thing; it's quite decided me about my future. I'm going to be a clergyman."

And I said:

"Not if your voice doesn't crack, surely?"

"My voice!" answered Percy minimus with great scorn. "What is a voice compared to a miracle? If miracles happen to you, then, if you've got any proper feeling, you ought to insist on being a clergyman."

So I suppose he will be. But whatever else he is--even if he rises to be a Canon or a Bishop--he'll always be a maniac, the same as his brothers.

THE PRIZE POEM

Things were beastly dull at Merivale when we went back after the Christmas holidays, and I believe even the Doctor felt it. Of course, from our point of view, his life must always be deadly, but I suppose he gets a certain amount of feeble excitement into it, in ways not known to us. It's rather interesting to wonder what

old people do find worth doing; yet they must do something to amuse themselves, off and on, or they'd go mad, I should think, which they seldom do. The amusements of a very old person must be rather weird, yet they clearly like to be alive, for when my grandmother died, she was eighty--a time of life when you'd think there was simply nothing left. Yet, when I went to say farewell to her, she told me she hoped to see the spring flowers once more. She didn't; but it shows how fearfully hard-up old people must be for amusement of any kind; for who on earth would want to see flowers, spring or otherwise, if practically everything else had not been lost to them? Myself I would much rather have died years before than eat the food my grandmother ate, and never go out except in a bath-chair; but she found it good enough, strange to say. So, no doubt, Dr. Dunston, who is entirely active, and can eat meat and drink wine and walk rapidly about, still finds being Head of Merivale School all right.

But the winter term was deadly, what with the bad weather and the slow progress of the War, and losing most of our football matches, owing to having a very weak team.

Then old Peacock, of all men--the new master, I mean--got an idea, and Fortescue thought it was a good one, and Peacock proposed it to the Doctor, and Dr. Dunston agreed to it.

In fact, he announced it after chapel during the third week of February in these words:

"Our new friend, Mr. Peacock, has made a proposal to me, and I have great pleasure not only in agreeing with him, but in congratulating him on a very happy thought. Suspecting that there may be mute, inglorious Miltons amongst us--a sanguine hope I cannot share--Mr. Peacock has thought that it would add an interest to the term and wake a measure of enthusiasm and energy in the ranks of our versifiers if we initiate a competition. He suggests a prize poem upon the subject of the War; and while my heart misgives me, yet I bow to Mr. Peacock's generous proposal. You are invited, one and all of you, from the greatest to the least, to write a prize poem on the subject of the War, and if such a momentous theme fails to produce some notable addition to our war poetry, then Mr. Peacock's disappointment will be considerable. He trusts you to enter upon this task in no light spirit, and when I add that Mr. Peacock proposes to give a prize of one guinea--twenty-one shillings--to the victorious poet, you will see that a real effort is needed. You will have a calendar month to prepare and execute your verses, which must be composed outside the regular school hours; and I may tell you that unless a certain humble standard of intelligence and poetic ability is reached, I shall direct Mr. Peacock to withhold his prize."

Well, there it was; and, of course, a good deal of excitement occurred, and it was jolly interesting to see who entered for the prize poem and who did not.

No doubt Travers major would have won it without an effort, being so keen about everything to do with war; but, luckily for the rest, he had left to go to Woolwich the term before. Travers minor entered because he was strongly advised to, being a flier at literature in general and keen about poetry; but he said frankly he should not praise the War, but slate it, because he utterly disagreed with it and hated war in general.

Of course, the prize being a guinea made a lot of difference, and many unexpected chaps decided to write a prize poem, though most of these, when they sat down with pens and ink to do it, found such a thing quite beyond them in every way.

I myself--my name is Abbott--was one of these, and after reading a good many real poems of the War, which Mr. Fortescue, who was a great poet and much interested in the competition, kindly lent me, I found, on setting out to do it, that the difficulties were far too great. Rhymes are easy enough to get, in a way, but when you come to string the poem together, you generally find your rhymes aren't solemn enough. I believe I could have written a screamily funny prize poem; but, of course, that wouldn't have pleased the Doctor, or Peacock either, so it wasn't any good wasting time being funny. For instance, I wrote the following poem in less than ten minutes:

The Hun, the Hun, the footling Hun,
Most certainly doth take the bun.

And Blades and several other chaps said it was jolly good. But Blades, who had also had a shot or two on the quiet, was like me--he could only make comic poems, and the stanzas of his poem took the form of Limericks. He said he could invent them with the greatest ease--in class, or at prayers, or at meals, or going to bed, or getting up, or in his bath--in fact, at any time when he wasn't playing football. He gave me an example, which seemed to me so frightfully good that I thought very likely Peacock would have given him a consolation prize. So he tried it on Peacock; but Mr. Peacock thought nothing of it, and said that was not at all the spirit of a prize poem, but belonged to the gutter-press, whatever that is. It ran like this:

The Kaiser set off for Paree
As if it was only a spree,
    But old French's Army,
    It soon knocked him barmy,
And now he is melancolee.

He next had a flutter at Nancy,
Though doubtless a little bit chancy;
But his men got a doing,
With plenty more brewing,
So he galloped off, saying, "Just fancy!"

There were hundreds more verses--in fact, you might say the whole history of the War as far as it had got; and I advised Blades to send it to *The Times*--to buck it up--or *Punch*, or something; but he wouldn't, and when Peacock decided it was no use, he gave up writing it, so a good poem was lost, in my opinion.

Many fell out before the appointed day for sending in the prize poems; but many did not, and though it was natural that a good few chaps chucked it, the extraordinary thing was the number of chaps who kept on to the bitter end, so to speak, and sent in poems. Almost the most amazing was Mitchell. He certainly had made a rude poem once in a moment of rage, but as to real poetry, a cabbage might just as well have tried to make a poem as him. He was only keen about one thing in the world, and that was money; and, of course, that was why he entered the competition. He said to me: "I'd do much worse things than make a prize poem, if anybody offered me a guinea. If it had been one of the Doctor's wretched prizes, I wouldn't have attempted it; but a guinea is a guinea, and as nobody here can make poetry for nuts, I'm just as likely to bring it off as anybody else. It's taking a risk, in a way, but I've got my ideas about the War, just as much as Travers minor or Sutherland, and, if I don't win, I shall get a bit of fun out of it, anyway."

He was a mean beast always, but cunning and frightfully crafty; and as he had never had a decent idea in his life, let alone a poetical one, we were all frightfully interested in Mitchell's poem on the War.

The chap Sutherland he had mentioned was regarded as having a chance, for he knew a lot about the War, and had two cousins in it, one in France and one with the Fleet. He got letters without stamps on them from these chaps, but there was never much in them. Thwaites also entered, and he was known to write poetry and send it home; but it had not been seen, and Thwaites, being delicate and rather fond of art and playing the piano and such like piffle, we didn't regard him as having warlike ideas. Besides, once, when Blades suddenly pulled out one of his teeth in class and bled freely over Thwaites, who sat next to him, Thwaites fainted at the sight of blood; which showed he couldn't possibly write anything worth mentioning on such a fearful subject as war; because, you may say, a war is blood or nothing.

Only one absolute kid entered, and this was Percy minimus, who had sent a

Christmas pudding to the Front, and had the photograph of a "Tommy" back. So he wrote a prize poem which he let his friends see, and Forbes minimus said it was good, as far as he could say to the contrary. No doubt it appeared so to a squirt like Forbes minimus, but, of course, it could not be supposed to stand against the work of Travers minor, or Sutherland, or Rice.

I always rather thought myself that Rice might pull it off, being Irish and a great fighter by nature. Unfortunately, he didn't know anything whatever about poetry; yet his fighting instinct made him enter, and though he wasn't likely to rhyme very well, or look after the scanning and the feet and the spondees and dactyls, and all that mess, which, no doubt, would count, yet I hoped that, for simple warlike dash, Rice might bring it off. I asked him about it, and he said a good many things had gone wrong with it, but here and there were bits that might save it.

He said:

"I believe I shall either win the guinea right bang off, or get flogged." Which interested me fearfully, but didn't surprise me, because it was rather the way with Rice to rush at a thing head-long and come out top--or bottom. He only really kept cool and patient and never ran risks when he was fighting; but at everything else, which he considered less important, he just dashed. He had dashed at the prize poem--very different from Tracey, who was always cool about everything, and wouldn't have gone to the Front himself for a thousand pounds. Tracey was great at satire--in fact, satire was a natural gift with him--and though, of course, it didn't always come off, owing to being so satirical that nobody saw it, still he often did get in a nasty one; and sometimes got licked for doing so.

He told me his prize poem was all pure satire, and I said:

"I doubt if the Doctor or Peacock will see it."

And Tracey said:

"I can't help that. Poetry is art, and I can't alter my great feeling for satire to please them. It will come out; and even though old Dunston and Peacock don't see it, I know jolly well the Kaiser and the Crown Prince would, if they read it."

Well, there it was, and that was about the lot worth mentioning who had a shot at Mr. Peacock's guinea. The calendar month passed, and one day, when classes began, the Doctor appeared, supported by Peacock, Fortescue, and Brown.

Everybody was summoned into the chapel, and the Doctor, who dearly likes a flare-up of this kind, told us that the prize poems had been judged and were going to be read.

"I may tell you," he said, "that the prize has been won, contrary to my fear that none would prove worthy of it. But we are agreed that there is a copy of verses on the solemn subject set for discussion that disgraces neither the writer nor Merivale. Indeed, I will go further than that, and declare that one poem re-

flects no small credit on the youthful poet responsible for it; and Mr. Peacock and Mr. Fortescue, than whom you shall find no more acute and critical judges, share my own pleasure at the effusion."

The Doctor then began to read the prize poems, and he started with that of Percy minimus, much to Percy's confusion.

"The views of Percy minimus on the War are elementary, as we should expect from a youth of his years," said old Dunston. "I may remark, however, that he rhymes with great accuracy, and if he shows an inclination to be didactic, and even give Lord Kitchener a hint or two, I frankly pardon him for the sake of his concluding line. This reveals in Percy minimus a flash of elevated feeling which does him infinite credit. One can only hope that his pious aspiration will be echoed by those great nations doomed to defeat in the appalling catastrophe which they have provoked."

Then he gave us the poem.

THE WAR

BY PERCY MINIMUS

War is a very fearful thing, I'm sure you'll all agree,
But sometimes we have got to fight in order to be free.
The Germans want to slaughter us, and do not understand
We are a people famed in fight, and also good and grand.
We never were unkind to them and never turned them out
When unto England's shores they came, to trade and look about.

But all the time, I grieve to say, they only came as spies,
So that, when came the dreadful "Day," they'd take us by surprise.
Which they did do, and if our ships had not been all prepared,
The Germans would have landed, and not you or I been spared.
Now all is changed, and very soon, upon the Belgian strand,
I promise you a million men of English breed shall land.

And thanks to good Lord Kitchener, their wants will be supplied
With splendid food and cosy clothes and many things beside;
But he must bring the big siege guns when Antwerp we shall reach,
Because with these fine weapons we have got to make a breach.
So let us pray that very soon we smash the cruel Hun,
And if, by dreadful luck, we lose--oh, then God's will be done!

We applauded Percy minimus for his sporting attempt, feeling of course, it was piffle really, but good for a kid. Then the Doctor said he was going to read Rice.

"Mr. Fortescue," said Dunston, "has evinced the deepest interest in the achievement of Rice. He tells me that there is now a movement in art--including the sacred art of poesy--which is known as the Futurist Movement. Rice's effort reminds Mr. Fortescue of this lamentable outrage on the Muses, for it appears that the Futurists desire to thrust all that man has done for art into the flames--to forget the glories of Greece, to pour scorn on the Renaissance, to begin again with primal chaos in a world where all shall be without form and void. This is Nihilism and a crime against culture. For some mysterious reason, the boy Rice, who we may safely assume has never heard of the Futurists until this moment, appears to have emulated their methods and shared their unholy extravagance of epithets, their frenzied anarchy, their scorn of all that is lovely and of good repute. He even permits himself expressions that at another time would win something more than a rebuke. I will now read Rice, not for my pleasure or yours, but that at least you may learn what is not poetry, and can never be mistaken for poetry by those who, like ourselves, have drunk at the Pierian spring."

WAR

BY RICE

Smash! Crash! Crash! Bang! Crash! Bang!
Rattle, rattle, rattle, and crash again.
Air full of puffs of smoke where shells are bursting overhead,
Scream of shrapnel over the trenches and yells of rage!
Roar of men charging and howling a savage song---
"Now we shan't be long!" Tramp of feet--then flop! they fall,
Dropping out here, there, and everywhere, and rolling head
over heels like rabbits.
And some sit up after the charge, and some don't.
Shot through the heart or head, they roll gloriously over--all in!
But on go the living, shouting and screaming, and some bleeding
and not knowing it.
As loud as the "Jack Johnsons" they howl, their rifles are at
the charge and the bayonets are white--
The white arm that goes in in front and out behind--
Or in behind and out in front of the Germans running away.

The Boche hates the white arm--it sends him to hell by the million!
Crash! Crash! Squash! Smash! Smash! Smash!
The trench is reached. Blood spurts and bones crack like china.
Gurgles! Chokes! Yells! Helmets fly, bayonets stick
And won't come out! Everybody is dead or dying in the
trench--except twelve Tommies!
Damns, growls, yells choked with blood!
Death, awful wounds, mess, corpses, legs, arms, heads--all separate!
The trench is taken, and England has gained
A hundred yards! Hoorooh!
Hoorooh! Hoorooh! Hoorooh!
And what must it be to be there!!!

Signed RICE.

I looked at Rice while his poem was being intoned by the Doctor. He had turned very red, but he stuck it well, and somehow, though, of course, it was right bang off, and no rhymes or anything, I liked it. And Mr. Fortescue liked it, as he afterwards told Rice; but the Doctor and Mr. Peacock fairly hated it, so that was the end of Rice.

They thought nothing of Tracey's poem, either. The Doctor said:

"Tracey has produced what, for reasons best known to himself, he calls 'a satire.' It possesses a certain element of crude humour, which, on such a solemn theme, is utterly out of place. Upon the whole, I regard it as discreditable in a Sixth Form boy, and do not think the better of Tracey for having written it."

He then read Tracey.

A SATIRE

BY TRACEY

No doubt, O Kaiser, you have thought
Napoleon was a duffer
Compared to you, when you set out
To make Old England suffer.
But if you read your history books,
You'll very quickly find, Sir,
That Boney knew, despite his faults,

How to make up his mind, Sir.

You flutter up, you flutter down,
You flutter night and day, Sir,
Yet somehow victory won't look
Your mad and fluttering way, Sir,
But when the war by us is won,
And in Berlin our men, Sir,
You'll be a bit surprised to find
Where you will flutter then, Sir.

We laughed and thought it ripping; but the Doctor seemed to be hurt, and said: "Silence, silence, boys! It ill becomes us to jest at the spectacle of a fallen potentate, and still less so before he has fallen.

"A more pleasing effort is that of Travers minor," went on the Doctor, picking up the poem of Travers. "We have here nothing to be described as a picture of war, but rather the views of an intelligent and Christian boy upon war. Personally, I think well of these verses. They are unostentatious--no flash of fire--but a temperate lament on war in general and a final conviction not lacking in shrewdness. I will not say that I entirely agree with Travers minor in his concluding assertion, but he may be right--he may be right. At any rate, the poem is a worthy expression of an educated mind, and by no means the worst of those with which we are called to deal."

He then read Travers minor, and we were all frightfully disappointed, for it turned out that Travers hated war, so the result wasn't a war poem at all, but a very tame affair without any dash about it--in fact, very feeble, I thought. His brother would have despised him for writing it. Of course, Peacock wanted a poem praising up the glory of war, not sitting on it, like Travers minor did.

THE FOG OF WAR

BY TRAVERS MINOR

From out the awful fog of war
One thing too well we see--
That man has not yet reached unto
His highest majesty.
For battle is a fiendish art

We share with wolf and bear,
But man has got a soul to save--
He will not save it there.
This is the twentieth century,
We boast our great good sense.
And yet can only go to war
At horrible expense
Of human life. It makes us beasts;
We shout and spend our breath
To hear a thousand enemies
Have all been blown to death.
And each of all those thousand men
Was doubtless good and kind,
As those, no doubt, remember well
Whom he has left behind.
And when I hear that war brings out
Our finest qualities,
I do believe with all my heart
That is a pack of lies.

A deadly silence greeted the prize poem of Travers minor, and I believe the Doctor felt rather sick with us for not applauding it. And Tracey, who was very mad at what the Doctor had said about him, whispered rather loud that Travers minor's effort was almost worthy of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*.

There were only three poems left now, and the excitement increased a good deal, because nobody had won Peacock's guinea yet, so it was clear that either Mitchell, or Thwaites, or Sutherland minor was the lucky bargee. Both Mitchell and Thwaites seemed beyond the wildest hope, and we felt pretty sure that Sutherland must have done the trick. But he hadn't. The Doctor picked up his poem and put on a doubtful expression.

"I confess that Sutherland gives me pause," he said. "For skill in rhyming, Sutherland deserves all praise--he is ingenious and correct--but such is the faultiness of his ear that he flouts the fundamentals of prosody in each of his four stanzas. In fact, Sutherland's poetry, regarded as such, is excruciating. He has ideas, though not of a particularly exalted character; and even if he had given us something better worthy to be called a poem, his lamentable failure in metre would have debarred him from victory. His last verse contains an objectionable suspicion we might associate rather with a commercial traveller or small tradesman, than with one of us."

Well, Sutherland's wasn't bad really, though rather rocky from a poetical point of view, as the Doctor truly said.

KHAKI FOR EVER

BY SUTHERLAND

Loud roars the dreadful cannon above the bloody field,
While, like the lightning, through the smoke's dim shroud
The tongues of flame are flashing, where, concealed,
The vainglorious enemy's battery doth vaunt and laugh aloud,
Thinking that men of British race are going to yield.

Poor German cannon-fodder! Little do they know
That those who wear khaki have never yet
Wherever, at the call of Bellona, they may go,
Surrendered to a lesser foe than Death. They've met
Far finer fighters than the Boche, and made their life's-blood flow.

Whether upon the open battle-front, or in a trench,
Or in a fort, or keeping communications,
With such a leader as great General French
The British khaki boys defeat all nations,
And in the foeman's gore their glittering bayonets they quench.

And they will win, for right is on their side;
And when they do, the neutrals shall not share
The rich-earned booty the Allies divide;
For, as they would not sail in and fight, it is not fair
That they should win the fruits of this bloody tide.

We could see what the Doctor meant about Sutherland's poem--it didn't flow exactly; but it might have been worse. Then Dr. Dunston picked up Mitchell's poem and frowned; and Peacock frowned; and Fortescue also frowned. We didn't know what was going to happen, for the Doctor made no preliminary remarks on the subject of Mitchell. He just gave his glasses a hitch and glared over the top of Mitchell's effort and then read it out.

OLD ENGLAND FOR EVER

BY MITCHELL

Oh, now doth Death line his dead chaps with steel,
The swords of soldiers are his teeth, his fangs,
And now he feasts, mousing the flesh of man!
Rejoice, ye men of England, ring your bells.
King George, your King and England's, doth approach,
Commander of this hot, malicious day!
Our armour, that marched hence so silver bright,
Hither returns all gilt with German blood;
Our colours do return in those same hands
That did display them when we first marched forth;
And, like a jolly troup of huntsmen, come
Our lusty English all with purple hands,
Dyed in the slaughter of their Teuton foes.
But to their home they will no more return
Till Belgium's free and France is also free;
Then to their pale, their white-faced shore,
Whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tides
And coops from other lands her islanders--
Even to that England, hedged in with the main,
That water-walled bulwark still secure,
Will they return and hear our thunderous cheers.
But Belgium first, unhappy, stricken land,
Which has, we know, and all too well we know,
Sluiced out her innocent soul through streams of blood,
Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries,
Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth,
To us for justice and rough chastisement,
And, by the glorious worth of our descent,
Our arm shall do it, or our life be spent.

The Doctor stopped suddenly and flung his eyes over us. Naturally we were staggered and full of amazement to think of a hard blade like Mitchell producing such glorious stuff. Any fool could see it was poetry of the classiest kind.

"Do you desire to hear more?" shouted the Doctor.

And we said, "Yes, sir!"

"Then seek it in the immortal pages from whence the boy Mitchell has dared to steal it!" he thundered out, growing his well-known, deadly red colour. "With predatory hand and audacity from which the most hardened criminal would have shrunk, this abominable boy, insolently counting on the ignorance of those whose unfortunate duty it is to instruct him, has appropriated the Bard to his own vile uses; and his cunning has led him to interpolate and alter the text in such a manner that sundry passages are made to appear as one. Mitchell will meet me in my study after morning school. I need say no more. Words fail me----"

And they actually did, which was a record in its way. The Doctor panted for a bit, then he picked up Mitchell's poem, or rather, Shakespeare's, as if it was a mouse that had been dead a fortnight, and dropped it on the ground. It was rather a solemn moment--especially for Mitchell--and the only funny thing about it was to see the Sixth. Of course, they'd been had by Mitchell, just the same as us in the Fifth--in fact, everybody; but they tried to look as if they'd known it was Shakespeare from the first. As for Mitchell, he had made the rather rash mistake of thinking old Dunston and Peacock and Fortescue didn't know any more about Shakespeare than he did; and now he sat awful white, but resigned. As a matter of fact, he got the worst flogging he ever did get, and had a narrow squeak of being expelled also. It calmed him down for days afterwards, and he was also called "King John" till the end of the term, as a mark of contempt, which he badly hated.

Then the Doctor snorted himself calm, and his face grew its usual colour. He picked up Thwaites, and ended with the tamest poem of the lot, in my opinion. Which shows that grown-up people and boys have a very different idea about what is poetry and what isn't.

"The verses of Thwaites have won the poet's bay," said Dr. Dunston. "Thwaites alone has written a work worthy to be called a poem. His stanzas possess music and reveal thought and feeling. Neither technically are they open to grave objection. I congratulate Thwaites. Though not robust, or a pillar of strength, either in his class, or in the field, he possesses a refined mind, a capacity of emotion and a power for expressing that emotion in terms of poetry that time and application may possibly ripen and mature. Such, at least, is my opinion, and those who have sat in judgment share it with me."

He then gave us Thwaites--twittering sort of stuff, and interesting, not because Thwaites had got "the poet's bay," whatever that is, but because he had landed Peacock's guinea. Nobody much liked his prize poem except the masters, and even Thwaites himself said it wasn't any real good, and was written when he had a beastly sore throat and was feeling utterly down on his luck. In fact, he was going to call it "Lines Written in Dejection at Merivale," like real poets do, only he got better before he finished the last verse, and so didn't.

TO THE EARTH

BY THWAITES

Suffer, sad earth; no pain can equal thine:
Thy giant heart must ever be a shrine
For all the sorrows of Humanity.
As one by one the stricken ages die,
The bright beams of the stars are turned to tears,
And howling winds that whistle down the years
Sigh "Sorrow, sorrow, sorrow!" and are gone
Into the silence of oblivion.
Suffer, great world; the poison fangs of Death
Can only wound, not kill thee.... Lo! the breath
Of everlasting dawn is in the wind;
The distant throbbing of a giant Mind
Shall set the music of the Universe
Once more in time--with harmony coerce
The discord of a warring race to cease
And sorrow die within the arms of peace.

Thwaites spent his guinea almost entirely on tuck, and though he was very generous with it, and shared the grub with the competitors Rice and Sutherland minor, who were his friends, he still kept enough to make himself ill again. For it was one of the unlucky things about Thwaites that any muck really worth eating always bowled him over. He wrote a poem three times as long as his War poem, called "Effect of Cocoanut Rock on the Tummy of Thwaites"; but Dunston wouldn't have purred much over that.

THE REVENGE

If anybody has done a crime, Dr. Dunston generally speaks to them before the school, so that all may hear what the crime is. And according to the way he speaks to them, we know the sort of fate in store.

If he says he remembers what it was to be a boy himself, there is great hope, for, as Mitchell pointed out, that means the Doctor has himself committed the crime in far-off times when he was young; but if he doesn't say he remembers what it was to be a boy himself, then the crime is probably a crime he never committed; and these are the sort he punishes worst.

Well, in the case of Tudor, he had never committed Tudor's crime, and he himself said, when ragging Tudor before punishment, that he had never even heard of such a crime. Therefore the consequences were bad for Tudor, and he was flogged and his greatest treasure taken away from him for ever.

It was, no doubt, a very peculiar crime, and Mitchell told Tudor that it was not so much the crime itself as the destructive consequences, that had put the Doctor into such a bate. But we found out next term that the destructive consequences had been sent home in a bill for Tudor's father to pay, and they amounted to two pounds, so Tudor caught it at home also.

Well, it was like this: Tudor came back for the spring term with a remarkably interesting tool called a glazier's diamond. He had saved up and bought it with his own money, and it was valuable, having in it a real diamond, the beauty of which was that it could cut glass. It could also mark glass for ever; and, after a good deal of practice, on out-of-the-way panes of glass in secluded places, Tudor had thoroughly learned the difficult art of writing on glass. We were allowed to walk round the kitchen garden sometimes upon Sunday afternoons, and, occasionally, if a boy was seedy and separated from the rest for a day or two, for fear he had got something catching, such a boy was allowed in the kitchen garden under the eye of Harris, the kitchen gardener.

And Tudor often got queer and threatened to develop catching things, though he never really did; but on the days when he threatened, he generally escaped lessons and was allowed in the kitchen garden. Needless to say, that this place was full of opportunities for practising the art of writing on glass, and, as nothing was easier than to escape from the eye of Harris, he used these opportunities, and wrote his name and mine and many others on cucumber frames, and on the side of a hot-house used for growing grapes, and also on the window of a potting-shed.

I am Pratt, and Tudor and me were in the Lower Fourth. It was a class that Dr. Dunston, unfortunately, took for history, and on those occasions we went to his study for the lesson and stood in a row, which extended from the window to the front of Doctor Dunston's desk. He sat behind the desk, and took the class from there. But there was a great difference in Tudor and me, because I was at the top of the Lower Fourth and he was at the bottom. In the case of the Doctor's history class, however, this was a great advantage for Tudor, because the bottom of the class was by the window, and the top was in front of the Doctor.

Well, Tudor actually got the great idea of writing with his glazier's diamond on the Doctor's window! I advised him not, but he disdained my advice, and wrote in the left-hand top corner of the bottom sheet of glass. He wrote very small, but with great clearness, and it took him seven history lessons to finish, because it was only at rare moments he could do it. But the Doctor was now and then called out of his study by Mrs. Dunston, or somebody; and once he had to go and see the mother of a new boy who had written home to say he was being starved. It took ten minutes to calm this mother down, and during that interval Tudor finished his work. He had written the amusing words--

"BEYNON IS A LOUSE,"

and we were all rather pleased, except Beynon. But he well deserved the insult, being a fearful outsider and generally hated; and, in any case, he couldn't hit back, for though he had been known to sneak many a time and oft, yet it wasn't likely he would sneak about a thing that showed him in his true colours, like the writing on the Doctor's study window.

Well, it was a triumph in a way, and everybody heard of it, and it was a regular adventure to go into the Doctor's study and see the insult to Beynon, which, of course, would last forever, unless somebody broke the window; and, in fact, Beynon once told me, in a fit of rage, that he meant to break the window and take the consequences. But he hadn't the pluck, even when he got an excellent chance to do so; and when, in despair, he tried to bribe other chaps to break the window, he hadn't enough money, so he failed in every way, and the insult stood.

I must tell you the writing was very small, and could only be seen by careful scrutiny. It was absolutely safe from the Doctor, or, in fact, anybody who didn't know it was there; and, naturally, Tudor never felt the slightest fear that it would ever be seen by the eyes of an enemy.

When, therefore, it was discovered, and shown to the Doctor, and all was lost, Tudor felt bitterly surprised. It came out that a housemaid, who disliked Beynon, found it when she was cleaning the window, and she showed it to Milly Dunston, and the hateful Milly, who loathed Tudor, because he had once given her a cough lozenge of a deadly kind, and made her suck it before she had found out the truth, promptly told her mother about the inscription, and her mother sneaked to the Doctor.

Discovery might still have been avoided, but, unfortunately, Tudor's glazier's diamond was well known, because he had been reported by Brown for scratching Brown's looking-glass over the mantelpiece in Brown's study, when he thought Brown was miles away, and Brown came in at the critical moment. So Dunston knew only too well that Tudor had a glazier's diamond, and, owing to

the laws of cause and effect, felt quite sure that Tudor had done the fatal deed.

Therefore Tudor suffered the full penalty, and Dr. Dunston told the school that Tudor's coarseness was only exceeded by his lawless insolence and contempt for private property. That it should have been done in his own study, during intervals of respite in the history lesson, naturally had its effect on the Doctor, and made it worse for Tudor. The glazier's diamond had to be given up, and Tudor was flogged; but being very apt to crock and often bursting out coughing without any reason, the Doctor did not flog Tudor to any great extent; and it was not the flogging, but the loss of his glazier's diamond that made Tudor so mad and resolved him on his revenge.

Well, he had a very revengeful nature, as a matter of fact, and if anybody scored on him, he was never, as you may say, contented with life in general until he had scored back. And he always did so, and sometimes, though he might have to wait for a term or even two, he was like the elephant that a man stuck a pin into, who remembered it and instantly killed the man when he met him again twenty years later.

To be revenged in an ordinary way is, of course, easy; but to be revenged against the Doctor is far from easy, and I reminded Tudor how hard it had been even to revenge himself on Brown, when Brown scored heavily off him; and if it was hard to be revenged on a master like Brown, what would it be to strike a blow at the Doctor?

He said it might or might not come off; but he should be poor company for me, or anybody, until he had had a try, and he developed his scheme of a revenge, and thought of nothing else until the idea was ready to be put into execution.

He said:

"It's not so much a revenge, really, as simple justice. He took my glazier's diamond, which was the thing I valued most in the world, naturally; and what I ought to do, if I could, Pratt, would be to take from him the thing he values most in the world."

I said:

"That's hidden from you."

And he said:

"No, it isn't: the thing that he values most in the world is Mrs. Dunston."

I said:

"Well, you can't take her away from him."

And he said:

"I might. Some people would remove her by death. Of course, I wouldn't do anything like that. She's all right, though how she can live with a grey and brutal beast like the Doctor, I don't know--or anybody. But, of course, I can't strike him there. I've merely decided to take something he can't do without. He'll be able to

make it good in time, but not all in a minute; and in the meanwhile he'll look a fool, besides being useless to the world at large."

It was dangerous, but interesting.

I said:

"What could you take so important as all that, without being spotted?"

And he said:

"Swear not to tell anybody living."

And I swore.

Then he said:

"His glasses!"

It was a great thought, worthy of Tudor, and, of course, without his glasses the Doctor would be hopelessly done. He cannot read a line without them, and when he takes a Greek class, strange to say, he wears two pairs--his ordinary double-glasses, against the naked eye, and a pair of common spectacles, of very large size, on his nose outside. In this elaborate way he reads Greek.

Well, I praised Tudor, but reminded him it was stealing.

And he said:

"I know: that's where the justice comes in. He stole my glazier's diamond. Now I'm going to steal his glasses."

"Shall you ever give them back?" I asked.

And he said:

"I may, or I may not. The first thing is to get them."

"He takes them off to stretch his eyes sometimes," I reminded Tudor.

"Yes, and for tea," said Tudor. "If he goes in to Mrs. Dunston's room for a hasty cup of tea, he generally leaves the glasses in the study on his desk till he comes back to work."

Well, Tudor got them. In a week from the day he decided to take them, he had an opportunity. Every day that week he had contrived to be around when tea-time came on, and once Dr. Dunston found him hanging about the passage, and told him to be gone. But he was crowned with success, and that same night in the playground, by the light of my electric torch, Tudor showed me the solemn sight of the double-eyeglasses of the Doctor actually in his hand!

Well, he was fearfully excited about it, and concealed the glasses for a few hours in his playbox. Then, fearing there might be a hue and cry, and everything stirred to its foundations, he took the glasses out just before supper, and concealed them in a crevice on the top of the playground wall, only known to me and him.

That night he did not sleep for hours, and more did I. I pictured the Doctor's terrible anger at having to stop reading the news of the War, and Tudor told me next morning that he had put the Doctor out of action for all school purposes, as well as private reading, and we might hope for at least three days without him,

as it would take fully that time to manufacture such glasses as he wore.

But a bitter disappointment was in store for Tudor, and when the usual moment came for prayers in the chapel before breakfast, lo and behold, Dr. Dunston sailed in with a pair of glasses perched on his nose in the customary place! We could hardly believe our eyes; then we quickly perceived that Dunston evidently kept a reserve pair of glasses for fear of accidents. And the accident had happened, and he had fallen back upon the reserve pair, no doubt in triumph.

Well, Tudor said it was gall and wormwood to be done like that, and even thought of stealing the second pair of glasses; but then a strange and sudden thing overtook Tudor, and the very next Sunday a man came to preach at the chapel service for a good cause; and the good cause was a Medical Drug Fund for natives in the wilds of Africa. These natives become Christians under steady pressure, and after that always seem to be in need of drugs, especially quinine; and Tudor, who, owing to his lungs and one thing and another, had a good experience of drugs, was deeply interested, and gave sixpence to the Medical Drug Fund, and showed a strong inclination to become a collector for the Medical Drug Missionary. I had often read of sermons altering a person's ideas, and making him or her inclined to be different from that moment onwards, but I never saw it actually happen in real life before. Yet, in the case of Tudor, that Medical Drug sermon, and the stirring anecdotes of the savage tribes, tamed into well-behaved invalids by the Missionary, had a wonderful effect upon him, and it took the strange form of making him rather down-hearted about Dr. Dunston's glasses. Nothing had been said when they disappeared, and no fuss was made at all; and I advised him just to take them back quietly, when a chance presented itself, and slip them under some papers on the Doctor's desk, and leave the rest to time.

I said:

"You'd better do it now, while this feeling about being a collector for the Missionary is on you. It will soon pass off, and then you won't want to give them back."

He said:

"To show you how I did feel before hearing the Drug Missionary, Pratt, I may tell you I had an idea of taking the glasses home next holidays, and buying a new glazier's diamond and writing on the glasses the bitter words, 'THOU SHALT NOT STEAL,' and then returning them to his desk next term. But there are two very good reasons why I shall not do that. One is this strong pro-missionary feeling in me, and the other is that, if I did, Dunston would guess to a dead certainty who had done it, knowing only too well what I can do in the matter of writing on glass."

"He would," I told Tudor. "So the sooner you put them back unharmed, the better."

"I shall," said Tudor, "and I'm going to return them in a very peculiar way. I am going to hide them in a certain place, and then I am going to write an anonymous letter to Dunston, telling him they are in that place."

Well, I thought nothing of this idea.

I said:

"Why make it so beastly complicated? Besides, anonymous letters are often traced by skilled detectives, and if it was found you wrote it, where are you then?"

And he said:

"I have no fear about that, because the letter will all be carefully printed; and my reason for writing a letter at all is to explain to him that the Unknown, who took his glasses away, is sorry."

"What on earth does that matter to him?" I said.

"It matters to me," explained Tudor. "As you know, that Drug Missionary made a great impression upon me, and I have come to be very sick with myself that I did this thing. Of course, I am not nearly sick enough to give the show away and tell Dunston I did it, but I am sick enough to say I am sorry, and I want him to know it--anonymously."

Well, this was beyond me, and I told Tudor so. He then said:

"Sometimes, Pratt, people don't pay quite enough income tax; but presently there comes a feeling over them that they have defrauded the innocent and trustful Government, and their hearts are softened--I dare say often by a missionary, like mine was--and then they send five-pound notes by great stealth to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and feel better. And their consciences are quickly cured. But they take jolly good care not to send their names, because they know that, if they did, the Chancellor of the Exchequer would go much further, and, far from rewarding them for their conduct, would very likely want more still, and never trust them again about their incomes, and persecute them to their dying day. And it's like that with me."

Then I saw what he meant; and I also saw that there may be a great danger in listening to missionaries, and was exceedingly sorry that Tudor had done so. I still advised him not to write to the Doctor, and felt sure his conscience would be just as comfortable if he didn't; but when Tudor decides to carry out a project, he carries it out, and he is generally very unpleasant till he has. Accordingly, he dropped the Doctor's glasses into a deep Indian jar which stood on the mantelpiece in the study, and then, in great secret with me, he wrote his letter. It happened he had just got a new Latin Delectus, and at the end of this book was a sheet of clean paper without a mark upon it. We cut it out with a penknife, and took a school envelope and two halfpenny stamps, and wrote the letter and posted it to the Doctor on the following day.

Well, the letter ran in these words, all printed, so that there was no hand-

writing in it; and the envelope, needless to say, was also printed in a very dexterous and utterly misleading manner.

"DEAR SIR,

"I regret to have to confess that I stole your eyeglasses in a bad moment. There was a very good reason, but, all the same, I am sorry, and also clearly know now that it was a very wrong thing to do. It was a revenge, but it came to nothing, because you had a pair in reserve. I am glad you had. I prefer to be Unknown.

"Your glasses are in a beautiful and rare Indian jar at the left-hand corner of your mantel-piece, and I hope you will forgive, because my eyes have been opened by the visit of the Drug Missionary to Merivale, and I am sorry.

"I am, dear Sir, your well-wisher,

"THE UNKNOWN."

Well, this good and mysterious letter Tudor posted, and the very next morning, curiously enough, he entirely ceased to want to collect for the Drug Missionary. In fact, from that moment he fell back quite into his usual way of looking at things, and, by the next evening, actually said he was sorry he had given Dr. Dunston back his glasses. But he was sorrier still three days later, for then a very shattering event indeed happened to Tudor. The Doctor sent for him, and he went without the least fear, to find his anonymous letter lying on the Doctor's desk.

I heard the whole amazing story afterwards. The Doctor asked him first if he had written the letter, and, being taken utterly unawares and frightfully fluttered at the shock, almost before he knew what he was doing, you may say, Tudor confessed that he had.

Then the Doctor told him how vain it was for any boy to seek to deceive him. He said: "You see how swiftly your sin has found you out, Tudor."

And Tudor admitted it had. He was now, of course, prepared for the worst, yet, as he told me, his chief feeling at that moment was not so much terror as a frightful longing to know how the Doctor had spotted him. Of course, he couldn't dare to ask, so he merely admitted that his sin certainly had found him out quicker than he expected; and then, rather craftily, he said he was glad it had.

Well, the Doctor didn't believe this; but he was not in a particularly severe mood that evening, strange to say, and he told Tudor exactly what had happened. He said:

"It may interest you to know, misguided boy, that mentioning your anonymous letter to Mr. Brown, and informing him that I had found my lost glasses in the spot indicated, he evinced a kindly concern, and even assured me that he

would probably have no great difficulty in discovering the culprit. In the brief space of four-and-twenty hours he did so. Perceiving that the paper on which you wrote was obviously from a book of a certain folio, his first care was to ascertain, by comparisons of size, from what work it had come. Perceiving also that the paper was extraordinarily clean, he had no difficulty in concluding it was extracted from a new book. He then discovered that the page came from a Latin Delectus, and, on further inquiry, was able to learn that three copies of the work had recently been issued to members of the Lower Fourth. Pursuing his investigations, when the boys had retired to rest, he speedily marked down the mutilated volume in your desk, Tudor; and while I have already thanked him for his zeal and penetration, I feel little doubt that a time will come when, looking back on this dark page in your history, you will thank him also."

Well, Tudor didn't give his views about Brown, but he said the glasses had been very much on his mind, only he had not liked to return them without saying he was bitterly sorry. He told me afterwards that he was very nearly saying to Dr. Dunston that some boys would have returned the glasses without even an anonymous letter of regret; but fortunately he did not.

The Doctor then took him through the letter, and invited him to throw light upon it. He was chiefly interested in the part about revenge, and he forced Tudor to explain that the revenge was because Dr. Dunston had taken away his glazier's diamond. Dr. Dunston then said that incident was long ago closed, and that, in fact, after the pane of glass in his study had been taken out and a new one put in, he had dismissed the matter from his mind. He seemed much surprised that Tudor had not dismissed the matter from his mind also, and he told him that the revengeful spirit always came to grief in the long run. He then wound up by saying:

"You sign yourself 'The Unknown,' wretched boy, but let this be a lesson to you that henceforth you are neither unknown to your head master or your God. For the rest, since you have the grace, in this penitential though patronizing communication, to express sincere regret at your conduct, and also to record the fact that you are my 'Well-wisher,' though that is not at all the sort of expression suitable from a Fourth Form scholar to his head master--since, I say, I find these signs of grace, I shall not inflict the extreme penalty on this occasion. For the moment I have not determined on my next step, and will thank you to wait upon me this time to-morrow. Now you may go."

And Tudor said:

"Thank you very much, sir," and went.

He was a great deal cast down, and admitted, for once, I was right. But though his feeling for the Doctor was now, on the whole, one of patience and thankfulness, his feeling for Brown was very different, and when the wretched

Brown grinned at Tudor, and rotted him in class, and told the whole story of how he had played the beastly sleuth-hound on Tudor, and started calling him "The Unknown," Tudor took it with dignified silence, and from that instant started to plan the greatest revenge of his life. He told me that it might not be at Merivale he would be revenged, but in the world at large, and if it was not until Brown had grown old and bald-headed, the end was bound to be just the same, and the rest of Brown's life, however long it might last, would undoubtedly be ruined by Tudor. And he also said that he was jolly glad the missionary feeling had left him, so that not a shadow of remorse might come between him and Brown when "The Day" arrived.

Well, there was only one thing more rather interesting about Tudor's revenge on the Doctor, and that was Dr. Dunston's revenge on Tudor. Tudor went to him again at the appointed time, and, after a lot of jaw, the Doctor told Tudor that he must now write out the complete article on "Optics," in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, including all the algebra and everything. There were exactly ten huge pages of this deadly stuff, and Tudor was fairly frantic at first; but curious to relate, after he had done one page, he found it quite interesting in its way. Then it got more and more interesting, as it went on, and Tudor finally decided that there was no doubt, with his strong feeling for the science of optics, that he ought to take it up as a profession.

I asked him if he should take up microscopes or telescopes, and he said telescopes certainly, because that meant astronomy, and in time you might rise to be Astronomer Royal of Greenwich, which was something.

I said:

"It is a great thing to know the stars and comets by their names."

And he said:

"Yes, Pratt, and another great advantage of astronomy is that you may be out all night whenever you choose, and nobody can say a word against you."

So the extraordinary event came about that what Dr. Dunston intended as a stiff imposition and sharp punishment on Tudor, really worked in a very different manner, and instead of crushing Tudor and grinding him under the heel of Dr. Dunston, so to speak, only put into Tudor the splendid idea of mastering the heavens, and then, some day, getting the perfect freedom by night of an Astronomer Royal of Greenwich.

THE "TURBOT'S" AUNT

Of course, he was not really called "Turbot"; but just after he came to Merivale, some ass in the Fifth started the silly rag of calling everybody after a fish, and pretty well every fish known to science was rung in. In fact, they just about went round. Sometimes the likeness was fairly clear and the simile was good. For instance, being head of the school, I was called "Salmon," which is the king of fish; and as I am underhung and have rather fierce eyes, there was a certain fitness in calling me "Salmon." But after I had decided that Abbott could not have his colours for "footer," being lame, there was a feeling against me among Abbott's friends, and Tracey called me "Tinned Salmon," which was merely silly and not in the least amusing. Nor was it amusing to call Maybrick "Sardine" because he kept tins of this fish in his desk; but "John Dory" was all right for Nicholas, that being the ugliest fish in the sea, and Nicholas the ugliest chap at Merivale. "Porpoise" was true for Preston, who inclines to great fatness, and blows after exertion in a very porpoise-like way; but to call Briggs "Herring" because he was a "doter on a bloater," as Tracey said, and to call Tracey himself a "Torpedo Ray" because he was always trying to give shocks, was footling without being funny. On the other hand, it was neat to call Pratt "Cuttlefish," because he was always inky to the elbows; and as far as Bradwell was concerned, the nickname of "Turbot" suited him very well, owing to his eyes, which always goggled if a master spoke to him, and also owing to his mouth, which was all lips and rather one-sided when he laughed.

Kids, of course, have a poor sense of what is really funny, owing to their general ignorance. Yet they prefer their own feeble jokes to ours. A joke that the Sixth sees in a moment is utterly lost on them, while utter piffle, that no sane person would smile at, makes them scream. We, for instance, called Mitchell "Shark" because of his well-known habits over money, but this did not amuse the kids in the least; while they called Forbes minimus "Whale" because he was the smallest boy in the school; which naturally could not cause anybody but an idiot the least amusement.

Well, Bradwell was far from interesting from a mental point of view, having, as our master, Mr. Fortescue, said, apparently outgrown his brains. He was just at his seventeenth birthday when these remarkable events happened; but at first glance, and, in fact, until you talked to him, you would at once have said he was grown up. He was in the Lower Fifth, and it really looked as though a master was in the Lower Fifth rather than a pupil. And he was only there because it would have been a burlesque to put him any lower, though in strict justice, as far as his knowledge was concerned, he would have been in his right place in the Upper Third. But he had to stop in the Lower Fifth, and even there was an absurd sight, being six feet high and very large in every way, and having a distinct moustache, which, owing to its being black, could not be hidden. What a scissors could do he

did; but it was there, and grew by night, and could not be concealed. He was a very finely made chap, and had magnificent muscles; but such was his awkwardness and stupidity that he couldn't even use these muscles properly, and he was no earthly good even in the gym. At games he failed utterly, though he tried hard; but he was too slow even for a full-back at "footer," and couldn't get down quick enough for a "goaley"; in fact, rapid movement seemed utterly beyond his power. At cricket he was also an object of utter scorn, for despite his hands, which were huge, he couldn't hold the simplest catch; and despite his reach, which was that of a six-foot chap, he had not the humblest idea of timing a ball, or the vaguest notion of how to play a stroke. In fact, such was his unworthiness that he could only have played in the third eleven, and as that was naturally composed of kids of eleven and twelve, it would have been an outrage to see him in it. Bradwell meant well, but he was rather barred, not from dislike, but simply because he had, as it were, grown up before his time, and had a kid's mind in a man's body. In fact, he fell between two stools, in a manner of speaking, because, to the Sixth and the masters, he was a thing of nought, while to those who had a mind like his own, he was grown up and no use in any way.

I was the only one at Merivale who understood his weird case, and when he first came, I let him fag for me; but he was awful as a fag, and such was his over-anxiety to please and shine that he never did either. I had, in fact, to chuck him. At sixteen years and eleven months of age he led rather a lonely life; but when the War broke out, he said he was very interested in it, and asked me sometimes if I would be so good as to explain military matters to him. Which I did in the simplest words possible, as anything like regular military terms would have been far beyond him. On hearing that aeroplanes have great difficulty in descending by night, he invented a scheme of stretching strong nets with a big mesh on poles ten feet above the ground, spread over half a mile of landing-place, to catch them. This showed mind in a way; but he never appeared to have any real martial instinct, and when once a girl in Merivale handed him a white feather, he stopped and took off his hat and said:

"I quite understand what you mean, but I shan't be seventeen for a fortnight yet."

This the girl naturally refused to believe, and the "Turbot" came to me and complained about it.

As a matter of fact, I rather backed up the girl--not for giving "Turbot" a white feather, which is a vulgar and silly thing to give anybody, because you never know, as the great case of Fortescue showed--but because she didn't believe "Turbot" when he said he was only just about to be seventeen. To look at him, he might easily have been married, which shows appearances are very deceptive. But, anyway, I said:

"You can't blame a flapper for thinking you are of age to join the Army, Bradwell. Anybody would think so, and lots of younger-looking chaps than you have said they were eighteen, and been passed without a murmur, though their birth certificates would have given them away. But anybody six feet high and with a clearly visible black moustache, and with your muscles, would pass the authorities, and you may bet that many have."

He merely goggled, and said no doubt I was right.

I must tell you that "Turbot" had no father or mother, and, in fact, nobody but a single, oldish aunt who lived at Plymouth. But he had a guardian, who sent him to Merivale when his family unfortunately died; and at first he stopped at Merivale in the holidays. But once the aunt took him for a fortnight at Easter; and she appeared to like him, for, after that, he always went to her. The guardian did not, however, like "Turbot," and "Turbot" would have been quite content to stop at Merivale in the holidays, rather than spend his time with the guardian, who had no friendly feeling for him. In fact, you may say that "Turbot" was a duty rather than a pleasure to the guardian.

Then, at the beginning of the autumn term, in the first year of the War, "Turbot's" aunt wrote to Dr. Dunston and asked if "Turbot" might spend Saturday till Monday with her, because it was going to be his birthday; and the Doctor gave permission.

So "Turbot" went, and naturally was not missed in any way till Monday morning. Then at roll-call before chapel, the "Turbot's" well-known bleat was not heard, and it was soon perceived that he'd done something very much out of the common.

Nothing had been heard from his aunt, apparently, and so a telegram was dispatched to her, and, as no reply came to it, Dr. Dunston began to worry. He then sent off a telegram to the guardian, and the excitement decidedly thickened. After dinner the Doctor sent for me, as head boy, and told me that the guardian had heard nothing whatever about "Turbot."

"I may tell you, Travers," he said, "though there is no reason to repeat it, that Bradwell is not *persona grata* with the gentleman who stands to him *in loco parentis*. That is unfortunate for Bradwell, because he may lack friends in the future, being a boy without any mental ability, or that charm and power to please we occasionally find in the stupid lad. His guardian, however, evinces no uneasiness at the disappearance of Bradwell, and my knowledge of human nature inclines me to doubt if the individual in question will much care whether Bradwell returns or does not. I speak, of course, in confidence. But he is a busy man, and has a large family of his own, with its concomitant anxieties. He sends his own boys to Harrow, and it is not for us to judge his motives in so doing, or whether they are guided by disinterested desire for the future welfare of an obscure attorney's

sons, or influenced by that spirit of snobbishness from which few Englishmen are entirely free.

"Now, I shall ask you this afternoon, Travers, to undertake a little mission which I can safely trust to you. We are, as you know, very short-handed, and to spare a master is almost impossible. I will therefore invite you to go as far as Plymouth, call at No. 10 Mutley Plain Villas, and ask to see Miss Mason, the maternal aunt of Bradwell, and his sole surviving relative. It is a somewhat delicate duty, and you must regard it as a compliment that I seek your aid. Here is half a crown for your return railway fare. You will alight at Mutley Station, and should catch the five-thirty train back to Merivale. The lady has not responded to my telegram, hence my desire, before putting the matter in the hands of the police, to learn all she may be able to tell us. Present my card, and she will see you at once if at home. If not, wait until she returns."

It was rather a responsible thing, and a great compliment to me. So I went, first putting on my best clothes and a new pair of gloves. Arrived at Plymouth, I got out at Mutley, and easily found Mutley Plain Villas, which were only a quarter of a mile from the railway. The house was small, but very neat in appearance, and the door-knocker, which was of highly polished brass, gave a loud tapping sound into the hall. There was no sign of the "Turbot."

A servant of considerable age answered my knock, and when I asked her if Miss Mason was at home, she replied that she was. She told me to walk in, which I did. I then gave her Dr. Dunston's card, and was shown into a neat drawing-room, which had a piano in it, and a pile of khaki wool on a sofa. There was also an illustrated newspaper in the room, and I sat down on a chair and read the illustrated newspaper until Miss Mason arrived.

Presently she came, and proved younger than her servant, though still not in reality young. She was unlike Bradwell in every way. Even her eyes did not resemble his, being black and small--you might say beady--and her mouth had thin lips, which revealed lustrous teeth, which might have been false ones, though, on the other hand, they might not.

"Curiously enough," she said, "I was just writing a letter to Dr. Dunston when you arrived. Now I can send a message by you instead. Are you his son?"

"No, Miss Mason," I answered. "I am Travers, the head boy at Merivale School."

"How interesting!" she said. "And what are you going to do in the world, Travers?"

"I leave next term--this is my last term, in fact--and I am then going to try for Woolwich," I said.

"That means the Army, of course," she answered. "I hope you will pass well."

I then thanked her for this kind wish, and said I hoped so, too.

"Owing to the War," I explained, "there is no very great difficulty in passing into Woolwich at present, and I hope to get on quickly, and take my place in the fighting-line before the War is over."

She approved of this.

"Quite right," she said. "I never wanted to be a man before the War, but I do now."

She spoke in a very martial and sporting way, and rang for tea.

This was good of its kind, and when I had eaten pretty well everything, after handing her each dish first, she asked me if I would like an egg, and, of course, I said I would. Then she ordered the old servant to boil two eggs; and the old servant did so, and I ate them both. We talked of the War, and, funnily enough, I quite forgot all about the "Turbot" till a clock chimed on the mantelshelf the hour of five.

This, as it were, reminded me of my mission.

"I must soon go back to the station," I said, "so perhaps you will now be so kind as to tell me about 'Turbot.'"

"And who is 'Turbot'?" she asked.

So I had to explain that we were all called fish, owing to a silly joke, and I also hoped that she would not think that I meant anything rude to her nephew by mentioning him in that way. She was not in the least annoyed, and said:

"Ralph came to me on Saturday, and he left me on Sunday morning."

"Do you know where he has gone?" I asked.

And she said: "I haven't the slightest idea where he has gone, Travers."

"That's very serious," I said, "because your nephew's guardian hasn't the slightest idea, either."

Her lips tightened over her dazzling teeth at the mention of the guardian, and I could see she didn't like him. She spoke in a sneering sort of voice and said:

"Ah! Really?"

Then, feeling there was nothing more to discuss, I got up and cleared.

"Let me know if anything transpires," she said, and not happening to remember exactly what "transpire" meant, I merely said that no doubt the Doctor would tell her all that might happen in the future about Bradwell.

She shook hands in a kindly manner and saw me to the gate. And such was her friendly spirit that she picked a small blue flower and gave it to me to wear.

"Put it in your buttonhole," she said, which I did do until I was out of sight, and could chuck it away without hurting her feelings.

The Doctor didn't seem to like what I had to say, and evidently thought I hadn't got it right.

"His aunt appears as callous as his guardian," said the Doctor. "I am to understand that he went out on Sunday morning and did not return, and that Miss

Mason has not the slightest idea where he has gone to?"

"That's what she made me understand, sir," I said.

"I fail to credit it," answered the Doctor. Then he dismissed me, rather slightingly, and sent for Brown, who always does the detective business at Merivale.

There was a good deal of quiet excitement about it, and, of course, we all thought "Turbot" would be run to earth in a few hours, or days, at most. But he never was; and though the police looked into the matter, and hunted far and wide, they never even got a clue, because apparently there wasn't one to get. In fact, "Turbot" vanished off the face of the earth as far as Merivale was concerned; and it was a nine days' wonder, as the saying is, and no light was ever thrown upon it till long afterwards. The aunt was cross-examined by the police; but she knew nothing, and cared less, as Brown said, for he cross-examined her also. All she could say was that "Turbot" had gone out early, and not come home in time for church, as she naturally expected a boy brought up at Merivale to do. Which was one in the eye for Merivale. As for the guardian, he offered a reward of ten pounds for the recovery of "Turbot," and no more, which showed the market value of "Turbot" in that guardian's opinion.

The only person who really worried was the Doctor, and I believe he didn't leave a stone unturned to rout up "Turbot." But all in vain. He had entirely disappeared, and being so ordinary in appearance, without any distinguishing marks, he simply "vanished into the void," as Tracey said, and we sold his cricket bat at auction, and one or two other things of slight value which we found in his school locker. But a portrait of his mother we did not sell, and I gave it to the Doctor, who sent it to the aunt, who was much obliged for it, and wrote to old Dunston with great thanks, and said she would keep it until the happy day when "Turbot" turned up out of the void again. And that, I believe, made the Doctor more suspicious than ever, for he always believed that Miss Mason knew more about the "Turbot" than she pretended. In fact, he told Mr. Fortescue that she was prevaricating, and Fortescue said it looked as though she might be. As a matter of fact, Fortescue had his own theory about "Turbot," and though he never told anybody what it was till afterwards, then he told everybody because he proved to be perfectly right.

This was that Fortescue, who wrote such splendid War poetry, but was prevented from enlisting unfortunately by an illness of the aorta, which is part of the heart, and, when enlarged, is fearfully dangerous. But while he taught at Merivale, his soul was entirely in the War, and in his spare time he did good work, chiefly at the Red Cross Hospital in the town, where fifty wounded men were always on hand. When they got well, they went and others came; and sometimes, when the War slacked off, the numbers sank to thirty-two, or even thirty, and then, when it burst out more fiercely, they quickly rose to fifty again.

Milly Dunston was one of the workers there, but only for swank and the

sake of the uniform. I believe she peeled onions and shelled peas, and cut up meat and so on in the kitchen; and sometimes she was allowed to go and see the wounded; but I never heard that they cared much for her until they knew she worked in the kitchen. Then they took interest in her, because she could tell them what they were going to have for supper that night, and what they were going to have for dinner next day, which, naturally, are things very important to the mind of a wounded hero.

Mr. Fortescue was well liked at the hospital, and took many cigarettes there, also books suited to the Tommies, and he got to be so popular that there was a fair fight for him; and if he favoured one ward, and didn't go into the other for half the time, the other ward got vexed about it, for Tommy has a jealous nature in some ways, though so heroic in the field.

Then there came rather a bad cot case called Ted Marmaduke, and as soon as he arrived, he sent a special message to the school for me and for Fortescue; and Fortescue went to see him.

Of course, this happened long after I had left Merivale, and it was, in fact, my brother who wrote to me about it; for after six months at Woolwich, owing to luck and the War, and so on, I got a commission in the Royal Engineers, and went to France. And there I heard from Travers minor about the chap who wanted to see Fortescue. He had been wounded in the cheek and also in the leg, and his face was almost hidden; but his eyes were all right, and what was Fortescue's amazement to see the eyes of Ted Marmaduke goggle in the old familiar way the moment he came to his bedside. For there lay the "Turbot," and fearing that he was going to die, he had determined to tell somebody the truth, and not die anonymously, so to speak. And when he found he was at Merivale, of all places, naturally he thought of Fortescue and me. But I was gone to do my bit, so Fortescue went, and heard the true story of the wily "Turbot."

He could only tell it in pieces, because it hurt him awfully to talk, and, in fact, he wasn't allowed to talk much at a time. But what happened was this. He had gone to the aunt for his birthday, and told her in secret that he hated Merivale worse than ever, and was ashamed to be there, with a moustache and everything; and she was a very martial and fine woman, and entirely agreed with him. She had told him that he was just the sort they wanted in the Army, and that though he could not distinguish himself at school, that was nothing at such a time, and she felt positive that he would jolly soon distinguish himself in the Army, and do things at the Front that would make Merivale fairly squirm to remember how it had treated him. And such was the aunt's warlike instinct that when he reminded her he was only seventeen, she scorned him for remembering it. "Go to the recruiting people," she said, "on your seventeenth birthday, which is to-morrow, and when they ask you how old you are, say you'll be eighteen on your next birthday,

which will be true." And he gladly did so. But the aunt was fearfully crafty as well as warlike, for when "Turbot" decided to go off and enlist at Plymouth under his own name, she pointed out that he would instantly be traced by Dr. Dunston, and ignominiously dragged back out of the Army to Merivale. So she advised him to take a train to the North of England, and enlist up there, which he did do. And he changed his name to Ted Marmaduke, and the enlisting people in the North never smelt a rat, and were quite agreeable to take him when he said he would be eighteen next birthday. And such was the fine strategy of the aunt that she expressly made "Turbot" promise not to write a line to her till he was under orders for the Front. Therefore, when she was asked if she knew where he was, she could honestly say she didn't.

Of course, long before he came back wounded, he was entirely forgotten at Merivale, and when Fortescue discovered him in our Red Cross Hospital, and then confessed that he had always believed this was what "Turbot" had really done, the excitement became great, and many of the chaps asked to be allowed to go and see him, and some were allowed to do so.

But it was not till the "Turbot" had recovered, and was going back to fight, that Dr. Dunston forgave him; and he never forgave the aunt.

Yet that amazing aunt was more than a fine strategist; she was a prophet also, for Fortescue found out in the papers that Ted Marmaduke, of the 3rd Yorkshires, was promoted a sergeant, and had won the D.C.M. for splendid bravery in Gallipoli, just as his aunt had always prophesied he would. Of course, she came to see him at the hospital, but she didn't come to Merivale.

When he got nearly right, the old "Turbot" took tea at Merivale, and the Doctor let the past bury the past, as they say, and made a speech, and hoped that the chaps would follow "Turbot's" lead in certain directions, though not in all. But privately to the "Turbot" he said more than this. In fact, he dug up the past again, and reminded "Turbot" that he should not do evil that good may come.

And "Turbot" quite saw this, and said he never would again.

Then he went back to the wars once more, and had good luck, I'm glad to say, and before he'd been a soldier eighteen months, he got his commission. For though such a mug at school, the military instinct was in him all the time, and the War naturally brought it out. When he became Lieutenant Bradwell, his guardian tried to make friends again; but he scorned him, as well he might, though no doubt he will always be friendly with his crafty aunt, for you may say that he owed

pretty well everything to her masterly mind.

CORNWALLIS AND ME AND FATE

Dr. Dunston was always awfully great on the classic idea of Fate. He made millions of efforts to make us understand it, but failed. Blades said he understood it, and so did Abbott, and, of course, the Sixth said they did. But they always pretend to understand everything, including the War. Fate is the same as Greek tragedy, and a very difficult subject indeed.

Anyway, Cornwallis and me couldn't understand Fate, or how it worked exactly, until that far-famous whole holiday and the remarkable adventure which made Cornwallis and me blaze out into great fame, though only for a short while. As long as it lasted, however, the fame was wonderful; for the sudden, curious result of being somebody, after you have for many years been nobody, not only leaves its mark on your own character, but quite changes the opinion of other people about you, and also the way they behave to you. Enemies slack off and even offer to become friends, and people who have been your friends when you were nobody, redouble in their affection, and even get a sort of feeble fame themselves, owing to being able to approach you as a matter of course and not as a favour.

All this happened to Cornwallis and me; and though fame is said to have a very bad effect on some people, and make them get above themselves, like the Germans and Austrians, for instance, in our case, though dazzling in its way, the fame died out almost as quickly as it sprang up. In fact, to show you what people are, and what envy may do, just as Cornwallis and me began to sink back into our usual obscurity in the Lower Third, some beasts, such as Pegram and the master, Brown, said in public that the whole excitement was a mild attack of hysteria and utter footle, and that neither Cornwallis nor me had done anything but make little asses of ourselves, and that it was all pure luck and not fame at all.

But, anyway, the adventure did this for Cornwallis and also for me--it explained what the Doctor really meant by Fate; and afterwards we were always tremendously keen about Fate, and spoke well of it, though before, it had, if anything, rather bored us, because, at the age of ten, your fate is generally so far off. Until the great adventure I can't honestly say I had seen Fate bothering about Cornwallis, and he had never seen it bothering in the least about me; but afterwards, having, as you may say, got thoroughly to understand its ways, and its

special interest in us on a very important occasion--in fact, what you might call a matter of life and death--we always felt a sharp interest in it, and often noticed little marks of Fate at work both in school and out--sometimes for us and sometimes for other people. Not, of course, always for us, because, as Cornwallis said, and I agreed, we weren't everybody, and when it came to prizes and getting into "elevens," and other advantages, Fate undoubtedly favoured various chaps far more than us. But as I pointed out to Cornwallis, after saving our lives in a very ingenious and unexpected way, no doubt it had done enough for us for some years, and intended to give us a rest. We both saw the fairness of this, and did not complain in the least at our rather bad failures in the Lower Third afterwards. But, curiously enough, Dr. Dunston, though so well up in Greek tragedy and the ways of Fate as a rule, missed this, and said our reports were a scandal and a source of the utmost discomfort to him, and far from showing our gratitude to Fate as we ought to have shown it after the terrible affair of "Foster Day."

"Foster Day" was an important day at Merivale. It arose from the mists of antiquity, as they say, because among the first pupils old Dunston ever had, when he started Merivale, was a chap called Foster. He was very rich, and his father lived at Daleham, on the sea coast, and had a mansion and thousands of acres of land running down to the sea. This Foster seems to have liked the Doctor, and been a great success at Merivale; and his rich father evidently liked the Doctor, too, and so, when young Foster had the bad luck to fall for his country in the Boer War, the rich father Foster built a beautiful and precious chapel to his memory at Daleham, and had his soldier son carved in pure marble and put in the chapel. It was known as a memorial chapel, and simply couldn't be beaten in its way. And, not content with doing this, the rich father arranged with Dunston that fifty boys from Merivale should once every year come to a service in this chapel, and, after the service was over, be entertained in his grounds and on the sea-shore with games and luscious foods. The Doctor fell in with this excellent plan readily, and now for some years, on the seventh day of July, which was the day the splendid young soldier Foster had fallen, fifty chaps from Merivale drove over in brakes to Daleham and attended the memorial service, and sang a hymn, and afterwards enjoyed themselves in the spacious grounds and on the beach. For though not actually belonging to the rich old Foster, the beach finished off his estates, and so he had a special sort of right to it, and had built a boat-house, where he kept a steam launch and other vessels.

The day came round as usual, and, by rather exceptional luck, Cornwallis and myself got into the fifty, for nobody was barred, and it was always arranged that a certain number of chaps from the lower school should join the giddy throng. So we went in white flannels and the school blazers, little knowing what lay before us.

The day was slightly clouded by the fact that Brown was the master who took us, for Brown loves to display his power before strangers, and make us look as small as possible in order that he may shine. But the great Mr. Foster--though what he had done that was great I don't know--saw through Brown with ease, and told him we must do what we liked, and have a good time in every way--not, in fact, hampered by Brown.

After the service in the chapel, where some good singing was done by us, and a clergyman preached a rather longish sermon on duty and so on, the solemn business of the day began, and we had an ample meal. When I tell you that there were enough raspberries and cream for all, I need add no more. If all those raspberries had been put in one pile, we should have had "no small part of a mountain," as Virgil so truly says.

The great thing after dinner was to go and bathe and ramble on the shore. This was the time that Brown could be most easily escaped, and as he had to keep his attention on the chaps who went swimming, those who did not were able to enjoy themselves in various interesting ways.

The tide was out, and, by a little dodging behind rocks, Cornwallis and me, who did not bathe, were able gradually, as it were, to slip out of the danger zone; which we did do. A magnificent and interesting beach spread out before us, and we decided to explore it. So we retreated fast for some distance till a cliff jutted out and entirely concealed us, and then we went slower and explored as we went. Cornwallis had a watch, and as there was no serious work on hand till tea at five o'clock, we had more than two hours.

We did some natural history, and found small pools full of marine wonders, such as sea anemones and blenny fish, which in skilled hands can be made as tame as white mice, and can live out of the sea between tides. We also collected shells, and, much to my amusement, I collected one shell which I thought was empty, until I felt a gentle crawling in my trousers pocket, and discovered that a hermit crab lived in the shell, and was frantically trying to escape. This, of course, I allowed him to do, and no doubt he is puzzling to this day about what happened to upset his usual life.

On we went, and then the beach got narrower, and I said it was natural, but Cornwallis thought not. He thought the tide was coming in, which would account for the increasing narrowness of the beach.

I said:

"In that case, Cornwallis, we had better go back, because you can see, by the marks on the cliffs, that the tide will come here in large quantities, and, in fact, the water will be jolly deep."

And Cornwallis said he supposed it would. The time also was getting on, and we found it was past four. But, of course, we meant getting back fast, with an

occasional run, and had allowed half the time to get back that we allowed to go out.

We were just turning, after going a few hundred yards farther, when a most interesting thing appeared. The cliffs hung over rather, and were made of red sandstone, and very steep; but ahead of us was a ledge of rock half-way up the cliff, and on it a mysterious little house made of bits of old boat and painted with tar. It was extraordinary to see such a thing in such a lonely spot, and Cornwallis, who is rather suspicious, owing to the War and being a Boy Scout, wondered if it was all right. Because, if you are once a Boy Scout, as Travers minor pointed out, you are always a Boy Scout, and though you may not be scouting in a professional sort of way, yet, if anything peculiar happens, or you get a chance of doing good to the country, you must instantly look into it.

So Cornwallis decided to go and examine this queer shed, and I went with him. The door was open, but we saw no signs of life. It was a solid building made of heavy timbers, and there was a padlock on the door. Inside was a pleasant smell of tar and cobbler's wax and fish. It seemed to belong to a mariner of some sort; but, on the other hand, what mariner could possibly want to make his house in such a weird spot? There was no bed or washing basin or chest of drawers, to show that the stranger lived here, but there were many interesting things, including a lobster-pot, a telescope, and a large lantern of the sort used on board ship.

I saw nothing peculiarly suspicious, but Cornwallis did. From the first he took rather a serious view of it, and when he found a green tin full of petrol, his face went white, and he said it was Fate.

I said:

"What the dickens do you mean, Cornwallis?"

And he said:

"I mean, Towler, that this is the hiding-place of a German spy. There's a telescope with which he picks up periscopes, and there's a lamp, with which he signals to the submarines by night, and there's the petrol he takes to them to replenish their tanks. And this shows the Doctor was right: you can get Fate in real life as well as Greek tragedies."

And I said:

"But the prawn-nets and fishing-lines and corks and paint, and so on?"

And he said:

"These things are merely blinds to distract the eye from the others."

So I said:

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

And he said:

"I am going straight back, and after tea, or even before, I shall tell the great Mr. Foster there is a pro-German traitor under his cliff, and offer to show him the

way to the spot."

"I'll help," I said. "But the thing is to be careful, and surprise the spy at his work."

Just as I said these words, curiously enough, the spy surprised us, and we found ourselves in a position that wanted enormous presence of mind. Suddenly we heard the sound of heavy feet outside, and as there was only one way up to the hut, it was clear we could not escape without being seen. And if seen, of course, our object was lost, for the spy would make a bolt of it.

The question was where to hide, and, by the best possible luck, there was a chance to do so. A big tarpaulin hung on a nail on the side of the hut, and it was of great size, and came nearly to the ground, while at its feet was a seaman's box. Owing to the fortunate smallness of Cornwallis and me, there was ample room for concealment behind the tarpaulin, and our feet were hidden by the box. So we got behind it and hardly dared to breathe, though, just before the traitor came in, Cornwallis had time to whisper to me:

"If he's come for his tarpaulin coat, we're done for, and he'll very likely kill us!"

And I whispered to him:

"Be hopeful. Fate may be on our side, and it's not the weather for a tarpaulin coat, anyway."

Then the spy came in, and though I was not able to see him, Cornwallis, by a lucky chance, got a buttonhole of the coat level with his eye, and saw the fearful spectacle of the spy.

He was a dreadful object, with wickedness fairly stamped on him, so Cornwallis said afterwards. He was a big man with humpbacked shoulders and a cocoanut-like head, far too small for his body and legs. He was grey, and had a shaggy beard and a wide mouth that showed his teeth. These were broken and black. His nose was flat and small, and his eyes rolled in his head as he looked round his hut. They were black and ferocious to a most savage extent. He kept making a snorting sound, which was his manner of breathing. He wore dirty white trousers and a jersey, and upon his feet were dirty canvas shoes. He had no hat, and he didn't look the sort of person that Fate would be interested in. But you never know. He suspected nothing, and had not seen us come in, which was the great fear in my mind.

The creature did not stop long, yet long enough to give himself away for ever as a spy, for he took one of the green tins of petrol, and then, saying some English swear words to himself of the worst kind, went out and slammed the door behind him. We nearly shouted with joy, but a moment later our joy was changed into the most terrible sorrow, because the spy fastened the door behind him. We heard a chain rattle and a padlock click, so there we were, entirely at the mercy

of a creature evidently quite dead to pity in every way. This was, of course, Fate again, as Cornwallis pointed out.

There was a window about a foot square high up in the roof of the hut, and when the spy shut the door and locked us in, everything became dark excepting for the light from this narrow window. Therefore, when we were sure our enemy had gone, and there was not a sound outside, I got on to a table, and Cornwallis climbed on my back, from which he was able to look out through the window. Luckily it faced the sea, and Cornwallis reported that the sea had come a great deal nearer, and that the spy was only about fifty yards off. He stood on a sort of pier of rocks, and was pulling in a rope to which was attached a small motor-boat.

Then naturally I wanted to get on Cornwallis's shoulders, but he told me not to move for a moment. Then he said that the spy had got into the boat and was evidently going to sea. And then he said he had gone.

I next climbed on to Cornwallis, and so proved the truth of his words, for I distinctly saw the motor-boat speed off with the spy in it. I also saw that the tide had come in, and soon it was actually beating against the rocks twenty-five feet or so below us.

When the motor-boat had disappeared in a westerly direction, Cornwallis and me got down off the table and considered what we ought to do.

"The first thing is to make every possible effort to escape at any cost," I said. But he said that he had already thought of that, and felt pretty certain it was beyond our power. The window seemed the only hopeful place; but it was made not to open, and the glass was thick, and Cornwallis said we couldn't have got through the hole, even if there had been no glass. But I said:

"It is well known, Cornwallis, that if a man can get his head through a hole, he can get his body through."

And he said:

"It isn't well known at all. You might because you have got a head like a tadpole, but I couldn't."

I said I was sure I had read it somewhere, but, anyway, it didn't matter. We examined the hut thoroughly, and found it was only too well and solidly made. We were utter prisoners, in fact, and, owing to the spy not knowing it, might very likely be left to die of starvation. He might even have gone to join a submarine, and never come back.

"Perhaps he does know we are here all the time," said Cornwallis. "Perhaps he spotted us, and pretended he didn't. In that case he may have locked us in deliberately to starve us, not caring to waste a shot on us."

This thought depressed us a good deal, and presently the sun sank and the light began to fade, and a seagull that settled outside on the roof uttered a melancholy and doleful squawk.

Of course, we were far from despairing yet, and Cornwallis made a cheerful remark, and reminded me that if we had eaten our last meal on earth, at any rate it was a jolly good one.

And I said:

"There may be food concealed here, for that matter. We'd better have a good hunt, and look into every hole and corner before it is dark."

This we did without success. There were many strange things there, including pieces of wreckage, a bit of an old ship's steering-wheel, and a brass bell with a ship's name on it; but there was nothing eatable excepting some fish to bait a lobster-pot; and the fish hadn't been caught yesterday, and we had by no means reached the stage of exhaustion in which we could regard it as food.

Cornwallis said:

"As a matter of fact, our great enemy will be thirst. I am frightfully thirsty already, for that matter."

And I said:

"So am I, now you mention it."

As the light died away, we held a sort of a council, and tried to decide what exactly was our duty--to England firstly, and to ourselves secondly. We talked a good deal, until our voices grew queer to ourselves, and it all came back to the same simple fact--our duty was to get out, and we couldn't.

Then I had the best idea that had yet come to us.

I said:

"As we can't get out, we must try and get somebody in the outer world to let us out. The only question is, shall we attract anybody but the spy if we raise an alarm?"

Cornwallis said of course that was the question; but it didn't matter, because we couldn't raise an alarm.

I said:

"If we howl steadily together once every sixty seconds by your watch, like a minute-gun at sea, somebody is bound to hear sooner or later."

And he said:

"Far from it, Towler. We shall only tire ourselves out, and get hungry, as well as thirsty, for no good. Our voices wouldn't go any distance through these solid walls, and, even if they did, we are evidently in a frightfully lonely and secluded place, miles and miles from civilization, else the spy wouldn't have chosen it for his operations."

I admitted this, but we did try a yell or two. The result was feeble, and I myself said that if any belated traveller heard it, he would only murmur a prayer and cross himself, and hurry on, like they do in books. Then Cornwallis decided to break the window. He didn't know why exactly, but he felt he wanted to be up

and doing in a sort of way. Besides, it was beastly fuggy in the spy's den; so we broke the window with a boat-hook, and I got on the shoulders of Cornwallis and had a good yell through it; but no answer came.

Then another idea struck me, and it was undoubtedly this idea that saved the situation. We got the old ship's bell and hung it up on a rope as near the window as possible, and hammered it with the boat-hook, taking turns of five minutes each.

This created an immense volume of sound, and though, of course, it was more--far more--likely to bring the spy back than anybody else, we had now reached a pitch of despair, and would have even welcomed the spy in a sort of way. Cornwallis from time to time still worried about our duty, but I had long passed that, for it was nine o'clock. So at last I told him to shut up and hit the bell harder.

It was now quite dark, and from time to time heavy drops of rain fell through the window. The sea-going lamp would have been very useful now, for we might have signalled with it; but though there was an oil-lamp in it, we had no matches, and it was therefore useless.

Then, in a lull, when I was handing over the boat-hook to Cornwallis, whose turn it was to hammer the bell, we distinctly heard the stealthy sound of the motor-boat returning, and Cornwallis, mounting my shoulders, and nearly breaking my neck in his excitement, reported a red light below.

Then he heard several harsh voices.

Cornwallis said:

"We are now probably done for, Towler. The spy has evidently been to a submarine, and he's heard the bell, and you can pretty easily guess what submarine Germans will do to us. In fact, our Fate is right bang off."

I said:

"Surely they wouldn't kill two kids like us?"

And he said:

"Killing kids is their chief sport. They can't be too young--from babies upward."

So it looked pretty putrid in every way, and it wouldn't be true, and it wouldn't be believed, if I said Cornwallis and me weren't in the funk of our lives.

But the awful moments didn't last long, for, almost before the padlock was undone, what should we hear but the well known yelp of Brown!

Our first thought was that the crew of a German submarine had also got Brown; but even in our present condition we felt that was too mad. All the same, when he actually appeared, with two other men and the spy, he looked such a ghastly object, and was so white and wild, that it seemed clear that he was in a mess of some kind.

What he said when we both appeared in the lantern light was:

"Thank God!"

For the first and last time in his life he was apparently glad to see us. But after this expression of joy, he instantly became beastly, and, in fact, so much so, that a man behind him, who did not fear him, told him not to talk so roughly to us at such a moment.

This man turned out to be no less a man than the great Mr. Foster himself, and he explained to us that we had put everybody to frightful anxiety and distress, and that, in fact, he had feared the worst.

This much surprised us, and what surprised us still more was Mr. Foster's attitude to the spy, for he called him "Joe," and treated him in a most friendly manner.

We all went back to the motor-boat, and while it tore away to the landing-place under Mr. Foster's beach, we told our story. During this narrative, which was listened to very carefully, the man called Joe made several remarks of a familiar nature, which showed he was not in the least afraid of anybody, and we found out later that he was an old and trusted servant of Mr. Foster's, who lived at Daleham, and who managed Mr. Foster's motorboat, and caught lobsters for him and fish of many kinds, and was, in fact, a sort of family friend of long standing. It was admitted, however, that Joe was very queer to look at, and also odd in his ways. This arose entirely from his peculiar Fate, because Fate had had a dash at him too, and when a young man, he had once gone out fishing, and returned to find that during his absence his wife had run away for ever with another mariner. This was such a surprise to him that it had quite turned his head for a time, and, in fact, he had been odd ever since.

Having told our tale, we ventured to ask why everybody had feared the worst, and Mr. Foster explained the situation, and showed what a splendid and remarkable bit of work Fate had really done for Cornwallis and me.

He said:

"What did you intend to do when you left Joe's hut?"

And I said:

"We were going to tear back along the beach, sir, and give the alarm, because we thought he was a pro-German spy."

Joe gurgled at this, but did not condescend to answer.

"And do you know what would have happened in that case?" asked Mr. Foster.

"You would have explained to us that we were on a false scent, sir," said Cornwallis.

"No, my child, I should not," answered Mr. Foster, "for the very good reason that I should never have seen either of you again alive. Nor would anybody else.

If you had started to go back by the beach, you would both have been overtaken by the tide and most certainly been drowned."

"Crikey!" said Cornwallis under his breath to me.

"Yes," continued the good and great Mr. Foster, "if Joe here, quite ignorant of the fact that you were trespassing in his store shed, had not turned the key upon you both, you would neither of you be alive to tell your story now."

Somehow we never thought we were trespassing, but doing our duty to England. It just shows how different a thing looks from different points of view.

"You ought to be very thankful," said Mr. Foster, "and I hope this terrible experience will leave its mark in your hearts, my boys. You have been spared a sad and untimely death, and I trust that the memory of this night will help you both to justify your existence in time to come."

We said we trusted it would.

Then Brown, of course, put in his oar.

"And if you had used your eyes, Towler and Cornwallis, as I have tried so often to make you," he squeaked, "you would have seen a notice on the cliff warning people not to go beyond a certain point, as the tides were very dangerous."

"We were studying the wonders of Nature, sir," I answered, in rather a sublime tone of voice, because this was no time for sitting on Cornwallis and me. And just then the motor-boat came to shore, and it was found that we could catch the last train back to Daleham. So we caught it. Of course, all the other chaps had gone back in the brakes ages ago.

Mr. Foster blessed us, before the train started, in a very affectionate and gentlemanly way; but Brown did not bless us on the journey back. In fact, he said that he should advise the Doctor to flog us. We preserved a dignified silence. He couldn't send a telegram on in advance, as the office was shut, and therefore, when we arrived at Merivale, it was rather triumphant in a way, and the news of our safe return created a great sensation. In the excitement, food for us was overlooked entirely, until Cornwallis told the matron we had had nothing to eat since dinner. Food was then provided. The Doctor said very little until the following day, and then he told the whole story to the school after morning prayers; and not until we heard it from him did we realize what a good yarn it really was.

But nothing was done against us, much to Brown's disappointment, and from the way he hated Cornwallis and me afterwards, I believe he got ragged in private for not keeping his eye on us.

We wrote a very sporting letter to Mr. Foster, and said we should not forget his great kindness as long as we lived; and we also wrote home and scared up ten pounds for Joe, because he had locked us up and saved our lives. It was an enormous lot of money, and far beyond what we expected. My father sent five, and the mother of Cornwallis also sent five; and Cornwallis truly said it showed

that my father and his mother mast think much more highly of our lives than they had ever led us to believe.

In fact, so excited was the mother of Cornwallis about it that she couldn't wait till the end of the term, but had to come and see him and kiss him, and realize that he was still all there. But my father waited till the end of the term for me.

He is rather a hard sort of man, compared to such a man as Mr. Foster, for instance; and when I did go home and explained all about what Fate had done, he said he hoped that I would not give Fate cause to regret it--at any rate, during the summer holidays.

FOR THE RED CROSS

Of course, being for the Red Cross, we were jolly well paid for all our trouble by knowing what a tremendous lift we had given the Red Cross in general; but somehow we felt that, if anything, too much was made of the wonderful result, and too little of us, who had done it.

Because, you see, if a chap in the trenches covers himself with glory, as they so often do, it is noted down to the chap's credit, and he gets a D.C.M., or D.S.O., or a V.C.; but in our case, as Tracey rather neatly put it, we weren't so much as mentioned in dispatches, and the bitter irony was that Merivale fairly rung with the fame of Dr. Dunston, whereas the truth was that we did everything, and Dunston, far from urging us on, really threw cold water on the whole show, and, up to the last moment, feared we were in for a grisly failure, instead of a most extraordinary success.

There was a good deal of difference of opinion afterwards as to who sprang the idea, and, on the whole, I don't think any one chap could take the credit. It was too big a thing for one chap's mind, and you might say nearly everybody in the Fifth and Sixth had a hand in it. It grew and grew till it reached the stage of asking Dr. Dunston; and after he had conferred with Brown and Fortescue and old Peacock, he reluctantly agreed; and then it grew by leaps and bounds till it became the wonderful thing it was.

The idea was to give an entertainment for the funds of the Red Cross, and Blades believed it would be a better and finer entertainment if we did it absolutely on our own, without any help from the masters whatever. A few faint-hearted chaps thought not; but they were overruled, for, as Briggs pointed out, there was

no entertaining power whatever in the masters. The only one who would have been any good in that way was Hutchings, who sang remarkably well in a bass voice of great depth; but he was at the War, and none of the others had any gift that could lure a paying audience. No doubt they might have tried, but, as Tracey said, you couldn't ask people to pay good money just for the doubtful pleasure of seeing them trying. So it was settled that as there was a great deal of mixed power of amusing an audience in the school, we could do it without any assistance; and Fortescue supported this, and advised the Doctor that we should be given a free hand; but Peacock, of all people, doubted, and Brown, who wanted to shine himself in some way, thought we ought to have him and Fortescue to give a backbone to the show. What he was prepared to do, by way of backbone, we didn't ask; what he did do, when the time came, was to show the people to their seats, and his evening-dress, which we had not seen before, was worth all the money, if not more.

Anyway, Fortescue got the Doctor to let us do everything without help, and the end justified the means, as Saunders very truly said, though at one time it rather looked as if it might not.

It was announced in public that the scholars of Merivale were going to give an entertainment for the Red Cross before Christmas breaking up, and, when all was decided, we had two clear months for the preparations. Owing to the War and one thing and another, we didn't have much football that term, and the show got to be the great idea in everybody's mind--so much so, in fact, that owing to an utter breakdown in geography in the Lower Fourth, there was a threat from headquarters that the whole thing would be knocked on the head if the work was going to suffer.

So we gave the Lower Fourth some advice on the subject, and told them not one of them should do anything if they didn't buck up.

Of course, the great problem was, who should be in the show and who should not. That was a question for the Sixth, and it proved a very difficult problem, because there were immense stores of talent at Merivale, and some of the chaps best fitted to entertain a paying audience by their great gifts absolutely refused to appear; whereas, strangely enough, others, quite useless in every way, were death on appearing. We even had one or two letters from mothers, written to "The Committee of the Merivale Concert," fairly grovelling to us to let their sons do something. Of course, we ignored these, though Pegram, with his usual strategy, advised us to give young Tudor a show of some sort, because his mother and father were worth many thousands, and would doubtless buy dozens of front seats if Tudor did anything publicly.

So in one item of the performance, which was a scene from "The Merchant of Venice," we let Tudor and certain other kids come on in the crowd. We also let

Cornwallis and Towler sing a duet--not so much because it was a thing to pay to hear, but because of their great adventure on Foster Day, when by a fluke they weren't drowned, and so possessed a passing interest in Merivale.

The programme needed a fearful lot of thought, and we altered it many times. The first programme would have taken about three days to get through, and Tracey said, as it wasn't a Wagner Cycle, we'd better try and cram the show into three hours; and Briggs said there would be encores, which must be allowed for; and I remembered that there must be an interval, because on these occasions women want something to drink about half-way through, and men want both to drink and smoke also. And if they are prevented from doing these things, they often turn against the performance, and the last state of that show is worse than the first.

I am Thwaites, by the way, and, like Percy minor, I hope that I may go on the stage some day, being much inclined to do so. But his father is a professional actor, and so he has a better chance than me, mine being a Government official in London, who never goes to the theatre, always being too tired to do anything after his day's work. I recite when I get the chance, and have already acted several times; I also write poems. I did not push myself forward in the least, it was agreed, by a sort of general understanding, except in the mind of Percy minor, that I should play Shylock in the trial scene from "The Merchant of Venice." And Williams, who is pretty, and had many a time been rotted for his girl-like eyes and eyelashes, now found that his hour had come, for he was going to play Portia; and we hoped his beautiful appearance might carry him through, though at rehearsal it was only too apparent his acting would not.

The first part of the show was to end with the Shakespearean impersonation; but this was not all, though, of course, the cream of the night. We had in the second half an original satire in one act written by Tracey, and entitled "The White Feather." This would be the concluding item, and as we finally decided that we would have twelve separate items, that left ten to find.

There were some obvious things, like Percy minimus, who had a ripping voice, and was accustomed to singing both in and out of chapel. So, knowing he was considered class, we put him down for a song; and the school glee singers were also rather well thought of, and we gave them two items. This only left seven performances, and after we had subtracted most of the chaps who were going to perform in the plays, there was still an immense amount of mixed ability to choose from.

Of course, Rice had to be in it, though, in his usual sporting way, he said he could do nothing. But as he was the best boxer in the school, and almost as good as a professional "fly" weight, we felt no show would be complete without him, and it was arranged he should box three exhibition rounds with Bassett.

As Briggs said, with people who pay money, you must give everybody something they will like; and though the people who would come to see Shakespeare acted might not be at all the same people who would come to see Rice hammer Bassett, yet there it was--we didn't want to disappoint anybody, because the great thing with a successful entertainment is to make everybody thoroughly feel that they have had their money's worth, as Mitchell pointed out. He was going to take the money, and sit in the box and give out the tickets. He could have done other things, but chose that himself, having great natural ability in everything of a financial sort. And as all the tickets were numbered, we felt it was safe. Besides, for the Red Cross, nobody would let his financial ability lead him astray, so to speak.

Percy minor, the son of the famous professional actor, also wished to play Shylock, but was put down for a comic song--an art in which he excelled. And Tracey wanted to write it for him and make it topical; but we knew Tracey's satire, and felt it would not do. Besides, he'd already written a whole play, as it was, and was performing the chief part in it, so we let Percy minor choose his own song, and he chose one of Albert Chevalier's, which blended pathos and humour in a very wonderful way, but was difficult. This left five items, and it seemed almost a shame to leave out so much talent; but we finally decided on Abbott for a conjuring entertainment--him being a flyer at that art--and on Nicholas, who has the great gift of lightning calculation, though, strange to say, a fool in everything else. He stands with his back to a blackboard, and can divide or add in his head; and if you read him out ten figures, and then ten more to subtract from them, he can do it in a moment. And no doubt he will make his living in this way, though it is a science that is utterly useless in the world at large.

Allowing for Cornwallis and Towler, there were only two items left, and I had the good luck to remember there was, so far, nothing about the Red Cross in the whole show; so we asked Fortescue if he would allow a recitation of his famous poem on that subject, and he consented if he was allowed to coach the boy who did it. We gladly agreed to this, and Forrester was decided upon for the boy, though he would rather have given his well known and remarkable imitations of natural sounds, such as a cock crowing, or a bottle of ginger beer popping, or a man with a cold in his head, or a distant military band. It was decided, therefore, that if Forrester got an encore, he might give the imitations; but he didn't, so they were unfortunately lost, though many a paying audience would have liked them better than the recitation, splendid as it was.

For the last item of all it was almost impossible to choose between about ten chaps, and at last, after voting in secret several times, the Sixth got it down to young Hastings, who could play the fiddle in a manner seldom heard from a kid of nine years old, and Weston, who was prepared to black his face and play his

banjo. Finally we decided for Weston, because he was the eldest, and would be leaving next term but one, whereas Hastings, being only nine, was bound to have many future chances of appearing with his fiddle.

So that was the programme, and even when drawn out and written down, it was pretty staggering, but when actually printed in regular programme form, it was wonderful, and for my part I didn't see how the big schoolroom would hold half the people who were bound to come. In fact, I suggested giving two, or even three, performances on consecutive nights, but this was not approved of.

Being, as you may say, historical, I will here insert the programme. The price was threepence, or what you liked to give above that sum. Many gave more; some got copies for nothing, owing to the programme kids losing their heads about change. It appeared in this way on pink paper, faintly scented, and nothing was charged for the scenting by the printers, so I suppose the scent was their contribution to the Red Cross Fund.

FOR THE RED CROSS

On the seventeenth day of December next, by kind permission of Dr. Dunston, the scholars of Merivale will give the following entertainment in the Great Hall of Merivale School at 7.30 p.m. Doors open at seven o'clock. But reserved seats may be booked, and a plan of the room seen at Messrs. Tomson's, No. 4, High Street, Merivale.

THE PROGRAMME

1. Song by Percy Minimus (son of the world-famous actor, Thomas Percy).

2. Conjuring by Abbott (using live rabbits, live goldfish, etc.).

3. Three Rounds of Exhibition Boxing by Rice (Fly-weight Champion) and Bassett. N.B.--The rounds will be of two minutes' duration.

4. Glee Singing by the School Glee Singers.

5. Recitation, "The Cross of Red." Words (published in "The Times" newspaper) by Mr. Fortescue of Merivale School. Reciter, Forrester.

6. The Trial Scene from "The Merchant of Venice," by William Shakespeare. Dramatis Personæ as follows:

Shylock. Thwaites.
The Duke. Pegram.
Antonio. Saunders.
Bassanio. Preston.
Gratiano. Percy Minor.
Salerio. Travers Minor.
Nerissa. Percy Minimus.
Portia. Williams.

Magnificoes.
Tudor, Forbes Minimus, Hastings, and five others.
Scene: Venice. A Court of Justice.

N.B.--The scene will conclude with the exit of Shylock.
An Interval of Ten Minutes.

PART II

7. Glee Singing by the School Glee Singers.
("The Three Chafers," by request.)

8. Comic Song. Percy Minor (son of the great actor, Thomas Percy).

9. Lightning calculation. Nicholas (introduced by Thwaites. Must be seen to be believed).

10. Coon Interlude with Banjo. Weston.

11. Duet. Towler and Cornwallis (both nearly drowned last summer on Foster Day).

12. A Satire in One Act by Tracey, entitled "The White Feather."

Dramatis Personæ.

Captain Harold Vansittart Maltravers, V.C. Tracey.
General Sir Henry Champernowne, K.C.B. Blades.
A Policeman. Briggs.
Miss Sophia Flapperkin. Williams.

Scene: Trafalgar Square. Time: The Present.

GOD SAVE THE KING.
Booking Office: Mitchell.

Well, that was the programme, and, seeing the front seats were only half a crown, there didn't seem much chance of anybody not getting their money's worth.

I could say a great deal about the rehearsals, which were very difficult, owing to the question of scenery; and finally, after many suggestions, we decided merely to have wings, and leave the rest to the imagination, because we couldn't get within miles of a court in Venice, and Trafalgar Square was equally out of the question. And Percy minor said that really classy stage managers, like Granville Barker, relied less and less on scenery, and that the very highest art was to go back to Elizabethan times, and just stick up what the scene was on a curtain; and if people didn't like it, they could do the other thing. So we went back to Elizabethan times. But we had a professional man from Plymouth to make us up for Shakespeare, and he did it professionally, and we were rather dazzled ourselves at what we looked like on the night. Seen close, you're awful, but, of course, it's all right from the front.

The dresses for Shakespeare were also professional, and we had help, for without the matron and Nelly Dunston and Minnie Dunston, and a maid or two, the dresses would not have fitted, and so caused derision. But they did well, and we looked very realistic, though my Jewish gaberdine was too long to the last. However, nobody noticed, though naturally they did notice when Antonio's beard carried away, and it spoilt the pathos, because some fools laughed, instead of taking no notice, as any decent chaps would have.

Well, of course, the excitement was to see how the half-crown seats went off at Tomson's, and they weren't gone in a moment, by any means. You could book both half-crowners and eighteen-pennies, which came next, and people put off their booking a good deal. But when the programme was out, the booking improved, and five people booked in one day. It was rather interesting to hear who had booked, and Mitchell was allowed to go to the shop every morning after school to know how things were going. Sir Neville Carew, from the Manor House, took five half-crown seats in the front row, and Dr. Dunston himself took the next five. This news, we greeted with mingled feelings, yet, as Mitchell pointed out, he might have had them for nothing, which was true. The masters all took half-crown seats dotted about the big hall, and when Briggs asked Brown why they had done this, instead of sitting together, Brown said: "To applaud your efforts, Briggs, and suggest a consensus of opinion if we can." As a matter of fact, we didn't

want their wretched applause when the time came, for we got plenty without it.

The most sensational person to take a half-crown seat was old Black, from next door. He had always been our greatest enemy, and hated us, and he never gave anything back that went over his wall, and made us pay instantly if we did any damage, or broke a pane of glass, or anything; yet there he was. He sat in the second row, and not a muscle moved from first to last, and he never clapped once. Yet, extraordinary to say, the most remarkable thing about the whole performance had to do with old Black, though the amazing affair didn't come out till next morning.

Mitchell calculated that, if every seat was taken, we should clear thirty-four pounds odd, and he rather hoped the programmes would bring it up to thirty-six. From that, however, had to be subtracted the cost of the dresses and the professional man from Plymouth, and also the cost of the programmes and the piano man. It looked as if we should be good for a clear thirty pounds; but only if the house was full.

Happy to relate, it was, and many people who did not book at all, came and took their tickets at the door, and the one bob part was packed. In fact, a good many stood all through, including those interested in Merivale in humble ways, such as the tuck-woman and the ground-man and the drill-sergeant, and many other such-like people. When, therefore, after the interval for refreshments, Dr. Dunston got up and said we had taken thirty-seven pounds four shillings, there was great cheering, and most did not hide their surprise.

A reporter came from *The Merivale Trumpet* and Mitchell saw that he had plenty of refreshments for nothing, because this is expected by reporters, and much depends on it. He ate and drank well, so we naturally hoped for a column or two about the show; but the cur wrote a most feeble account in three inches of type, and gave all the praise to Dr. Dunston, so I need not repeat what he said.

The truth was as follows, and I shall take the programme by its items, and be perfectly fair about it. I won't pretend everything went off as well as we hoped, and some of the chaps didn't come off at all; but, on the other hand, many did, and the failures also got a friendly greeting. And even if you make a person laugh quite differently from what you expected, it's better than if he doesn't laugh at all. Besides, we had to remember that everybody had paid solid cash, so it wasn't like a free show, where people have got to be pleased, or pretend to be. Because, when you have paid your money, you are free to display your feelings; and if people in a paying audience are such utter bounders as to laugh in the wrong places, there's no law against it, and the performers must jolly well stick it as best they can.

Well, of course, Percy minimus was a certainty, and the start was excellent. In fact, some people wanted to encore him; but this did not happen--though he would have sung again--because the live rabbit which Abbott had borrowed from

Bellamy for his illusions broke loose and dashed on to the platform. So when the audience expected Percy back, instead there appeared a large, lop-eared white rabbit with a brown behind. It looked, of course, as if Abbott had already begun to conjure, and, in fact, had turned Percy into a lop-eared rabbit. Anyway, the people were so much interested that they stopped encoring Percy, and seemed inclined to encore the bewildered rabbit. Then Abbott appeared and caught the rabbit, which had rather ruined his show by appearing in this way; and Vernon and Montgomery, who were his assistants, brought on the magic table, with various objects arranged upon it for the tricks. Unfortunately, Abbott was very nervous, which is a most dangerous thing for a conjuror to be, and tricks which he would have done to perfection during school hours, or in the home circle, so to say, got fairly mucked up before the paying audience. He put on an appearance of great ease, but he couldn't manage his voice, and he forgot his "patter," and he also forgot how to palm, and kept dropping secret things at awkward moments, and making footling jokes to hide his confusion. The people were frightfully kind and patient, and that made him worse. I believe, if they had hissed, it might have bucked him up.

He forced a card, as he thought, on old Black, and after messing about with a pistol and an orange and a silk handkerchief and some unseen contrivances, he made the ace of spades appear in a bouquet of imitation flowers, and then challenged old Black to show his card, which he did do, and it unfortunately turned out to be the four of hearts. This fairly broke Abbott, and when it came to bringing the lop-eared rabbit out of a borrowed hat, every soul in that paying audience saw him put it in first. It is true he tried to conceal it in a mass of other things under a huge flag, supposed to be the Union Jack; but the rabbit, who had never been conjured with before, and hated it, kicked violently and defied concealment, so to say. However, Abbott got a lot of trick flowers and vegetables and about half a mile of yellow ribbon into the hat at the same time as the rabbit, and the audience had not seen him do this, so they were slightly mystified, and applauded in a weary sort of way. He finished up by bringing a bowl of goldfish out of a dice with white spots on it, and, though there was no great deception, it passed off safely for the goldfish. Then Abbott bowed and cleared out; and, thanks to Fortescue, who is fond of Abbott, and said "Bravo!" and tried to work up some applause, there was no absolute blank when he had done. But Montgomery and Vernon, who had to clear up the debris afterwards, got one of the best laughs of the night, because they became fearfully entangled in the yellow ribbon, and thoughtless people were a good deal amused to see it.

Then came Rice and Bassett in shorts, with a new pair of boxing gloves. A chair was put in each corner of the stage, and the seconds stood by the chairs. It was all pure science, but only a few chaps at the back appreciated them, and

when, as bad luck would have it, Rice tapped Bassett's ruby in the first round, the women part of the audience gurgled, and gave little yelps and screams. It was nothing, but evidently appeared strange and dreadful to them; so the Doctor stopped the exhibition, and that item can be put down as an utter failure. Perhaps it was a silly thing to have arranged for a mixed audience; but we had to think of Rice's feelings, and we also knew that scores of countesses and duchesses go to see Carpentier and Wells, and such like in real fights, so we little dreamed anybody would squirm at a harmless exhibition bout that wouldn't have shaken a flea. But it was so, and consequently the glee singers were a great relief, and while they warbled their simple lays, the female part of the audience recovered. Of course, we Thespians did not see any of these things, as we were all making up for the great Trial Scene.

Forrester got fair applause for Fortescue's fine poem, but nothing special. As a matter of fact, he forgot the third verse, which was the best, and doubtless Fortescue felt very sick about it; but he was powerless to do anything, though he never much liked Forrester after.

Then came the grand item, and it was good in every way, and went very smoothly till just the end. Of course, I can't say anything about my rendition of Shylock--in fact, I didn't feel I had gripped the audience in the least--but chaps told me you might have heard a pin drop, and nobody recognized me who knew me, and many of the people in the audience thought it was one of the masters, and not a boy at all. Pegram rather overacted the Duke, which is a part that merely wants stateliness, and no acting; but he would act, and so forgot his words and hung us up once or twice. In fact, Pegram was not good; but Antonio, by Saunders, was a very thoughtful performance, and so was Bassanio, by Preston. Percy minor certainly came off as Gratiano, and unfortunately he acted so jolly well that, in one of his fearful scores off me, I forgot the dignified pathos of Shylock, and laughed. It was a new reading, in a way, but I didn't mean to laugh, and it did a lot of harm, because after that the audience wouldn't take me seriously, though before, I believe, most of them had. It spoiled the illusion of the scene. Portia, in the hands of Williams, was most beautiful to see, but, from the art point of view, awful. He got out his words, however, and just at the end, before my exit, Minnie Dunston, who had plotted it with him in secret, threw him a bouquet of white chrysanthemums, and the fool picked it up and said out loud: "Thank you, Minnie!" Of course, after that, my exit went for nothing, and when it was over, I punched his head behind the scenes, while in front people were laughing themselves silly. We got two calls, and it shows what a force the drama really is, because in the second half of the programme nobody cared a button about such excellent things as Percy minor's comic song; and though Towler and Cornwallis were mildly applauded, it was only because they happened to be still alive and not

dead; and the lightning calculations of Nicholas didn't even tempt many men to come away from the refreshments. I dare say many of them were very poor, and had to make so many lightning calculations themselves, owing to the War, that they weren't specially interested in what Nicholas could do. But for Tracey's play they all came, and such applause was never heard within the walls of Merivale; which shows that the drama still holds its own. The idea of "The White Feather" was certainly very original, and the dialogue very satirical. As the girl with the white feathers, Williams appeared again--in a dress lent him by Minnie Dunston. This was too small in some places and too big in others; but thanks to a huge female hat and a wig of golden hair, Williams made a very fair flapper, though inches too tall for such a creature. He gave a feather to Captain Maltravers, V.C., from Gallipoli, who was in mufti; and Tracey, with an eyeglass--which he manages fairly well--and a moustache, was frightfully satirical at the flapper's expense, and every point he made went with a roar. Then the flapper stuck a white feather into the frock-coat of General Sir Champernowne--also in mufti--and he was not satirical, but got into a frightful rage, and gave up the flapper to a policeman. She cried and begged for pardon; and then the V.C. returned, and saved her from the General and the policeman, and promised to marry her after the War.

The house was fairly convulsed, and it was really jolly true to nature--so much so that the pianist almost forgot "God Save the King" when all was over. For though a professional, and well used to entertainments, he laughed as much as anybody.

Then the people "came like shadows and so departed," in the words of the immortal Bard; and not until next day did the final stupendous thing happen with old Black. He looked over the playground wall just before dinner, as he often did, to make a beast of himself about something, and, seeing me and Weston and another chap or two kicking about a football, he said to me: "Are you the boy Thwaites?" And I said I was.

Then he said: "Come in, Thwaites; I want to speak to you."

My first thought was--what had I done? But as I hadn't had any row with old Black for two terms, my "withers were unwrung," and I went; and he took me into his study, and handed me a bit of pink paper with writing on it.

"What's this, sir?" I asked.

"A cheque for the Red Cross," he answered. "A cheque for twenty guineas, to add to the money from your performance last night."

He was scowling all the time, mind you, and looking as if he hated the show.

"I'm sure it's very sporting of you, sir," I said to old Black.

"Not in the least," he replied. "I laughed more last night than I have laughed for fifty years. And I only paid half a crown--much too little for what I got."

I was fearfully amazed.

"Excuse me, sir," I said, "but I didn't see you laugh once!'

"No," he answered, "and more did anyone else. When I laugh, I laugh inside, boy, not outside. So do most wise men. Now be off; and when you next play Shylock, let me know. If I'm alive, I'll come."

So I went, and we cheered old Black from the playground. He must have heard us, but he didn't show up.

Certainly, taking one thing with another, there are many extraordinary people in the world, and you may be surprised at any moment. No doubt it was one of those cases of coming to scoff and remaining to pray that you hear about, but don't often actually see.

THE LAST OF MITCHELL

There is a great deal of difference between being expelled and "invited to find another sphere for your activities." In fact, as my father said, if Dr. Dunston had expelled me, he would certainly have made a row about it, and very likely have written to the newspapers.

But old Dunston was a jolly sight too wily for that. He wrote to my father when the event happened, and said that circumstances had come to his ears which made him think, etc., etc., that I had better leave Merivale.

I am Mitchell, and my father is a financier, and I may say that this profession embraces a great many branches.

Sometimes, after dinner in holidays, he has allowed me to stop and smoke a cigarette while he talked to friends, and so I have got a gradual inkling of what it means to be a financier; and, in a way, this inkling was my downfall. Not that I felt it a downfall really to be hoofed out of Merivale; for it was rather a potty sort of show, and I should have gone to a far more swagger place if my father had been flusher just at the time when I had to go somewhere, owing to a trifling bother at another school.

But I went to Merivale, and just because I tried to take advantage of what my father had said about finance and apply it to school life, the difficulties arose.

I gathered off and on from my father, when he was in a talkative frame of mind, that one of the great arts of a financier is to do deals between other people.

For instance, you have something to sell, and my father knows it. And he routs about and leaves no stone unturned, as they say, until he finds somebody

who wants to buy just what you want to sell. Then, having found you a customer, my father arranges all the details of the business, and everybody is satisfied, and my father, for all his time and trouble, gets richly rewarded.

Then, again, another fine branch of the financier's art is the floating of public companies. To float a company requires great skill and nerve.

The first thing is to find a place a long way off, far beyond the reach of intending shareholders, in fact. Then you discover this far-off country is extraordinarily rich in minerals, or india-rubber, or manure, or some other useful material which everybody wants. You send out a mineral or manure expert to the far-off country, and he is delighted to find these things in enormous quantities, and sees at a glance that, if properly managed, they will produce dividends of very likely a hundred per cent. for the first year, and much more afterwards.

Then my father, or whoever it might be, is glad, and he goes about to other skilful men who understand companies, and they collect together and make a board. The more famous financiers there are upon this board the better the public likes it; and so the company is floated, and the public is invited to put in money.

This the public is only too thankful to do, because, of course, the thing promises so well; and then the shares are quoted on the Stock Exchange, and the papers are suddenly full of the company some morning, and the board sits and has a champagne luncheon and arranges its salaries and so on.

Of course, the people who have found that happy, far-away land, flowing with minerals and manure and such like, are richly rewarded, as they deserve to be; and sometimes they take it in money and sometimes in shares, and sometimes in both.

And all may or may not go well; but the financier, whose business it is to do these things and float the company, takes care to come out of it all right in any case--otherwise it is no good being a financier.

There was once a very fine company floated by my father and several of his scientific friends, for extracting gold from salt water.

It was based on thoroughly sound principles; because science has proved that there is so much gold in every ton of salt water; and, of course, if it is there, it can be extracted by modern inventions. So my father and others of even greater renown were filled with the idea of promoting a company to do this.

It was a brilliant and successful company in a way, but did not last long for some reason.

They started at a place near Margate, I think, with pumps and tubes to draw in the water, and machinery and professional chemists to get the gold out of it, and a staff of twenty skilled men, who understood the complicated mechanism. And they easily got enough gold from somewhere to make the prospectus, and also enough to make a brooch for the manager's wife; and no doubt they would

have got much more in course of time, but something failed--the water in the English Channel was a bit off, or some other natural cause--and my father said it would have been far better for everybody concerned if the works had been put up in the Isle of Skye, or perhaps in Norway, or in the West Indies, or the Fiji Islands, where conditions might have been better suited to success.

But gold was none the less made for my father and one or two others, "though not from the sea," as my father said thoughtfully when discussing the winding up of the affair.

There is another and even higher branch of the financier's art--the loftiest of all in fact. This consists in floating loans for hard-up monarchs, and it is absolutely the biggest thing the financier does. It wants great skill and delicacy.

You can also float loans for hard-up nations if you understand how to do it, but there are hundreds of financiers who never reach these dizzy heights of the profession, just as there are hundreds--you may say millions--of soldiers who never get above being colonels, and thousands of clergymen who fall short of becoming bishops.

My father, of course, understood these high branches of his profession, and once even went so far as to be interested in a loan for a South American Republic; but before the thing was matured, one side of the Republic was destroyed by a volcano and the other side by insurgents, who shot the President and all his best friends; and these events so shook investors in general that they would not subscribe to that loan, though the Republic, in its financial extremities, offered fabulous rates of interest.

I mention my father at such great length just to show the man he was and to explain my own bent of mind, which lay in the same direction. He said once, in a genial mood, that no man had ever made more bricks without straw than he had. It seemed to me a very dignified and original profession, because you are on your own, so to say, and you go out into the world single-handed, and by simple force of a brilliant imagination and hard work, win to yourself an honourable position. You may even get knighted or baroneted, if your financial genius is crowned with sufficient success to give away a few tons of money to a hospital, or the "party chest," whatever that is.

So, understanding all these things fairly well, it was natural that I took the line I did in the affair of Protheroe minimus and young Mayne. And, whatever the Doctor thought, my father didn't see any objection to the operation; and, of course, his opinion was the only one I cared about.

It was like this.

Young Mayne, though very poor, had a most amazing knack of prize-winning. He was in a class where all the chaps were a year older than him, and yet he always beat them with the greatest ease. He was good all round, and thought

nothing of raking in prizes term after term.

In fact, it seemed a thousand pities, seeing that he was very poor and the only son of a lawyer's clerk, that his great prize-winning powers were not yielding a better return. For, not to put too fine a point upon it, as they say, the prizes at Merivale were piffle of the deepest dye, and of no money value worth mentioning. Dr. Dunston went on getting the same books term after term, and simply unreadable slush was all you could call them.

The few things that were good were all back numbers, like "Robinson Crusoe"--all right in themselves, but nobody wants to read them twice; and then there were school stories that would have made angels weep, especially one called "St. Winifred's," in which boys behaved like girls and blushed if anybody said something dashing. Then there were books about birds and animals and insects, and for the Lower School the Doctor used to sink to "Peter Parley" and the "Peep of Day," and such-like absolute mess of a bygone age.

These things were all bound in blue leather and had a gold owl stamped upon them, which was the badge of Merivale.

I believe the owl was supposed to be the bird of Athena, and stood for wisdom, or some such rot. Anyhow, it wasn't a bad idea in its way, for a more owlish sort of school than Merivale I never was at.

And young Mayne got more of these books than anybody; but to him they were as grass, and he thought nothing of them. Whereas Protheroe minimus had never won a prize in his life, and wanted one fearfully--not for itself, but for the valuable effect it would have on his mother.

She was a widow and loved Protheroe minimus best of her three sons. The others had taken prizes and were fair fliers at school; but Protheroe min. was useless except at running. So, woman-like, just because he couldn't get a prize anyhow, his mother was set on his doing so, and promised him rare rewards if he would only work extra hard, or be extra good, or extra something, and so scare up a blue book with a gold owl at any cost.

Well, if you have a financial mind, you will see at a glance that here was a possible opportunity. At least, so it looked to me. Because on the one hand was young Mayne, always fearfully hard up and always getting prizes at the end of each term as a matter of course; while on the other hand was Protheroe min., never hard up but never a scholastic success, so to say, from the beginning of the term to the end--and, of course, never even within sight of a prize of any sort.

Here it seemed to me was the whole problem of supply and demand in a nutshell; and the financier instinct cried out in me, as it were, that I ought to be up and doing.

So I went to young Mayne and said that I thought it was a frightful pity all his great skill was being chucked away, and bringing no return more important

than the mournful things that he won as prizes. And he said:

"A time will come, Mitchell."

And then I told him that a time had come.

"I know you sell your prizes for a few bob at home, and that you think nothing of them," I said. "But I had a bit of a yarn with that kid Protheroe yesterday, and it seems that what is nothing to you would be a perfect godsend to him. You may not believe it, but his mother, who is a bit dotty on him, has promised him five pounds if he will bring home a prize."

"Five pounds!" said Mayne. "The best prize old Dun ever gave wasn't worth five bob."

"She doesn't want to sell it--she wants to keep it for the honour and glory of Protheroe min.," I explained. "And the idea in my mind in bringing you chaps together for your mutual advantage was, firstly, that you should let Protheroe have one of your prizes to take home in triumph to his mother; and, secondly, that he should give you a document swearing to let you have two pounds of his five pounds at the beginning of next term."

Mayne was much interested at this suggestion, and, knowing that he must be a snip for at least two prizes, if not three, at the end of the summer term, he had no difficulty whatever in falling in with my scheme.

We were allowed to walk in the playing-fields on Sunday after chapel before dinner, and then Mayne and Protheroe minimus and myself discussed the details.

Funnily enough, they were so full of it between themselves that they did not exactly realize where I came in; so I had to remind Protheroe that it was I who had arranged the supply when I heard about his demand; and I had also to remind him he had certainly said that if anybody could put him in the way of a prize, he would give that person a clear pound at the beginning of next term.

I also had to remind Mayne that he had promised me ten shillings on delivery of his two pounds.

In fact, before the day was done I got them both to sign documents; because, as I say, when they once got together over it, they seemed rather to forget me. So I explained to them that my part was simply that of a financier, and that many men made their whole living in that way, arranging supplies for demands and bringing capitalists together in a friendly spirit. But not for nothing.

They quite saw it, but thought I asked too much. However, I was older than they were, and speedily convinced them that I had not.

There was only one difficulty in the way after this, and Protheroe came to me about it, and I helped him over it free of charge. He said:

"When I take home the prize, what shall I say it's for? You know what my school reports are like. There's never a loophole for a prize of any kind."

"You might say good conduct," I suggested; but Protheroe min. scorned the

thought.

"That would give away the whole show at once," he said. "Because even my mother wouldn't be deceived. It's no good taking back a prize for good conduct when the report will be sure to read as usual--'No attempt at any improvement,' which is how it always goes."

Everything I suggested, Protheroe scoffed at in the same way, so I could see the prize would have to be for something not mentioned at all in the school report.

Of course, you don't get book prizes for cricket, or footer, or running, which--especially the latter--were the only things that Protheroe min. could have hoped honestly to get a prize for. But I stuck to the problem, and had a very happy idea three nights before the end of the term. I then advised Protheroe to say the prize was for "calisthenics."

There are no prizes for calisthenics at Merivale; but it sounded rather a likely subject, especially as he was a dab at it. And, anyway, he thought it would satisfy his mother and be all right.

So that was settled, and it only remained for Mayne to get his lawful prizes and hand over the least important to Protheroe min.

It all went exceedingly well--at the start--and young Mayne got the prizes and gave Protheroe the second, which was for literature.

The thing was composed entirely of poems--Longfellow, or Southey, or some such blighter--and Protheroe said that his mother would fairly revel to think that he had won it. He packed it in his box after "breaking up," and we exchanged our agreements; and it came out, when all was over, that young Mayne was to have two pounds out of Protheroe's five, and I was to have ten bob from Mayne and a pound from Protheroe--thirty shillings in all; and Protheroe would have the prize and two pounds, not to mention other pickings, which would doubtless be given to him by his proud and grateful mother.

You might have thought that nothing could go wrong with a sound financial scheme of that sort. I put any amount of time and thought into the transaction, and as it was my first introduction into the world of business, so to speak, and I stood to net a clear thirty shillings, naturally I left no stone unturned, as they say, to make it a brilliant and successful affair.

And yet it all went to utter and hopeless smash, though it was no fault of mine.

And you certainly couldn't blame Protheroe min. or Mayne either. In fact, Protheroe must have carried it off very well when he got home, and the calisthenics went down all right; and Mayne, when his people asked how it was that he hadn't got more than one prize, was ingenious enough to say that he'd suffered from hay fever all the term and been too off colour to make his usual haul.

So everything would have been perfection but for the idiotic and footling

behaviour of Protheroe min.'s mother.

This excitable and weak-minded woman was not content with just quietly taking the prize and putting it in a glass case with the prizes won in the past by Protheroe's brothers. She must go fluttering about telling his wretched relations what he'd done; and, as if that was not enough, she got altogether above herself and wrote to Dr. Dunston about it. She said how glad and happy it had made her, and that success in the gymnasium was something to begin with, and that she hoped and prayed that it would lead to better things, and that they would live to be proud of Protheroe minimus yet, and such-like truck!

Well, the result was a knock-down blow to us all, as you may imagine, and the Doctor showed himself both wily and beastly, as usual. For he merely asked Protheroe's mother to send back the prize at the beginning of the term, as he fancied there might have been some mistake; but he begged her not to mention the matter to Protheroe minimus.

So when Protheroe and Mayne and myself all arrived again for the arduous toil of the winter term, and Mayne and I were eager for the financial disimbursements to begin, we heard the shattering news that, at the last moment, Protheroe hadn't got his fiver.

It was to have been given to him on the day that he came back to school; but instead his mother had merely told him that she feared there was a little mistake somewhere, and that she couldn't give him his hard-earned cash till Dr. Dunston had cleared the matter up.

Needless to say that Dunston did clear it up with all the brutality of which he was capable.

As for myself, when the crash came, I hoped it would happen to me as it often does to professional financiers in real life, and that I should escape, as it were. Not, of course, that I had done anything that in fairness made it necessary for me to escape, because to take advantage of supply and demand is a natural law of self-preservation, and everybody does it as a matter of course, not only financiers.

But, much to my annoyance, the common-sense view of the thing was not taken, and I found myself "in the cart," as they say, with young Mayne and Protheroe minimus.

The Doctor, on examining Protheroe's prize for calisthenics, instantly perceived that it was in reality young Mayne's prize for literature. But evidently anything like strategy of this kind was very distasteful to the Doctor. In fact, he took a prejudiced view from the first, and as young Mayne was only eleven and Protheroe min. merely ten and a half, it instantly jumped to Dunston's hateful and suspicious mind that somebody must have helped them in what he called a "nefarious project." And, by dint of some very unmanly cross-questioning, he got

my name out of Mayne.

I never blamed Mayne; in fact, I quite believed him when he swore that it only slipped out under the treacherous questions of the Doctor; but the result was, of course, unsatisfactory in every way for me.

I was immediately sent for, and had no course open to me but to explain the whole nature of financial operations to Dr. Dunston, and try to make him see that I had simply fallen in with the iron laws of supply and demand.

Needless to say, I failed, for he was in one of his fiery and snorting conditions and above all appeal to reason.

"It was an ordinary sort of transaction, sir," I said, "and I don't see that anybody was hurt by it. In fact, everybody was pleased, including Mrs. Protheroe."

This made him simply foam at the mouth.

I had never been what you may call a great success with him, and now to hear sound business views from one still at the early age of sixteen, fairly shook him up.

He ordered me to go back to my class, and when I had gone, he flogged young Mayne and Protheroe minimus. He then forgave them and told them to go and sin no more; and the same day, doubtless after the old fool had cooled down a bit, he wrote to my father and put the case before him--though not quite fairly--and said that, apparently, I had no moral sense, and a lot of other insulting and vulgar things. In conclusion, he asked my father to remove me, that I might find another sphere for my activities.

And my father did.

He never took my view of the matter exactly; but he certainly did not take Dr. Dunston's view either. He seemed to be more amused than anything, and was by no means in such a wax with Dr. Dunston as I should have expected.

He said that the scholastic point of view was rather stuffy and lacked humour; and then he explained that I had certainly not acted quite on the straight, but had been a "deceitful and cunning little bounder."

I was a good deal hurt at this view, and when he found a billet for me in the firm of Messrs. Martin & Moss, Stock Brokers, I felt very glad indeed to go into it and shake off the dust of school from my feet, as they say.

It is a good and a busy firm, and I have been here a fortnight now. Ten days ago, happening to pass Mr. Martin's door, and catching my name, I naturally stood and listened and heard an old clerk tell Mr. Martin that I was taking to the work like a duck takes to water.

I am writing this account of the business at Merivale on sheets of the best correspondence paper of Messrs. Martin & Moss!

They would not like it if they knew.

But they won't know.

THE END

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